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THE

WHOLE WORKS

OF THE

REV. OLIVER HEYWOOD, B.A.

NOW FIRST COLLECTED, REVISED, AND ARRANGED,

Including some Tracts extremely scarce, and others from unpublished Manuscripts :

WITH

MEMOIRS OF HIS LIFE.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOLUME THE FIFTH,

CONTAINING

A NEW CREATURE.
THE TWO WORLDS.
MEETNESS FOR HEAVEN.
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.
ORIGINAL SERMONS.
YOUTH'S MONITOR.

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PREFACE

TO THE LAST VOLUME.

THE venerable OLIVER HEYWOOD, whose Works are now published in a uniform and complete edition, was one of the most laborious and useful men of his age. He shone brilliantly among a numerous host of radiant stars, which then appeared in the firmament of the church. He suffered along with his brethren in what they regarded as a righteous cause; he embraced every opportunity of doing good, and has left behind him a name, which is still pronounced, not only with respect, but veneration.

A period in which he passed his days, "not in the soft obscurities of retirement, nor under the shelter of academic bowers," but amidst the rage of persecution —a period, in which anxiety must often have preyed upon his heart feelingly alive to the interests of religion—a period, in which he not unfrequently was driven from the tender charities of home, and hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, was the season in which, at intervals, whenever persecution had suspended its fury, he employed himself in writing his largest Treatises. The evil days on which he was

cast, and which not rarely involved him in difficulties, embarrassments, and sufferings, may serve to account for imperfections sometimes visible in the arrangement and style of his writings. But his Works, notwithstanding that many of them were composed in such adverse circumstances, form a precious memorial of his singular piety, and his ardent zeal for the cause of God.

Those Works were approaching the gulph of oblivion, and have been arrested on their passage. Whether, in preserving from oblivion the compositions of such a devoted, zealous, and eminent servant of the Redeemer, the Editor has exercised a sound discretion, he leaves the public to decide. In the mean time, he has learnt with pleasure, that the pious feelings of many have been excited by the perusal of the preceding volumes; and wherever piety has shed its heavenly influence, he doubts not, the whole of this publication will prove acceptable, and become a source of spiritual benefit.

Several years ago, proposals were issued for the republication of Mr. HEYWOOD'S Works; but the patronage, which was at that time solicited and promised, did not appear sufficient for giving encouragement to carry the design into execution. However, the present Editor ventured to propose again a New Edition, and, without reserve, to throw himself for indemnification upon the liberality of the Public, which had never previously disappointed him when attempt-

ing to serve the interests of religion; and with feelings of gratitude he acknowledges, that his confidence has not been misplaced. The respectable List of Subscribers, who have favoured him with their names, has removed all apprehension of ultimately suffering any pecuniary loss, in consequence of his having undertaken to circulate a portion of the valuable, though unpolished productions of a former age.

In this Volume, what has been lately selected from the Manuscripts of the Author is printed in a smaller character than the Treatises previously published by himself, partly to distinguish the one from the other, and partly to preserve uniformity in the size of the Volume.

W. V.

A

NEW CREATURE;

OR, A

Discourse

ON GALATIANS VI. 15.

AN

EPISTLE

To my dear Friends and beloved Hearers at Northowram in Yorkshire.

My Dearly Beloved,

TWO sorts of doctrine I have always judged necessary, and very seasonable: first, what concerns the person, natures, offices, and undertaking of our Lord Jesus Christ, in all their mediatorial latitude; secondly, that which relates to a saving internal work of grace upon the hearts of men, which is the spring of all external action. These are as standing dishes requisite in every feast, and to the obtainment of which, my heart hath been much disposed. The former I have largely treated, from 1 Tim. i. 15, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief,"—which contains the sum and substance of our christian faith, the marrow of the gospel, the quintessence of our happiness; nor doth any minister need to be "ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth," Rom. i. 16. And though this may seem to be out of fashion amongst some who would be esteemed rational preachers, and think that treating of Christ is but a conceited canting, though the great apostle of the Gentiles mentions the name of Christ nine several times in his first ten verses in the first chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, and in his epistles some hundreds of times; yea, and glories in it, expressing himself thus, 1 Cor. ii. 2, "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." But I wave this subject for the

present. That which hath respect to the inner man, especially the new man, or a saving work in the soul, is the subject before us, which has engaged my attention much; and after my pilgrimage amongst you, above forty-four years, in many difficulties, not without some success of my poor labours, "knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle," 2 Pet. i. 14. I was willing to leave one legacy more behind me, as a standing testimony to surviving posterity, of my long attachment to the concerns of your precious souls, and a means of your spiritual good, when my mouth is closed in the dust. And having lately treated on this subject, some of you desired me to publish it, which I was the more willing to do, for these reasons: 1. Because I am sure the subject is of daily, important, and universal use. 2. I have not seen any complete treatise upon it. 3. Its necessity is great. 4. Some were greatly alarmed on hearing it; and who knows what good the presenting of it to the eye, as well as to the ear, may do? It is true, it is simply and plainly drest, not with ornaments of art or rhetorical flourishes to set it off to the learned, being adapted in intelligible language to ordinary capacities, and possibly it may prove more profitable to country hearers; nor ought it to offend any, that much of this treatise is in scripture dialect, in words which "the Holy Ghost teacheth," 1 Cor. ii. 13; which the spiritual man cannot but approve and love.

And now, my dear neighbours and friends, God knows, and you know, "From the first day that I came to you, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons," Acts xx. 18; my tears, temptations, banishment, imprisonment, confiscations, night travels, and preachings, fastings, watchings, encouragements, and discouragements, and appealing to the searcher of hearts for its truth, I may say, what the same apostle said to his Galatians, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you," Gal. iv. 19. Alas, what are you better for having Christ revealed to you, unless he be revealed in you? Gal. i. 16. Oh! woe will be to you, if you prove Christless, after hearing so much of Christ. Words signify little without something more, and no profession or change will do, but what is genuine, and accompanies salva-

tion. I will say to you, as Dr. Harris to his children in his last will and testament, "Think how you and I shall endure the sight, and the thought of one another at the last day, if you appear in the old Adam! much less shall you stand before Christ, unless you shew the image of Christ in you; and therefore never cease till you be made new creatures, and study well what that is."

Alas! sirs, you may make a shift to pass through this world unsuspected; many moralists, yea, Christians may subscribe their names to your testimonial, and give you the right hand of fellowship in this world, when you must be set at the left in the next: things will not then go on as they do now. Deal faithfully with God and your own souls; see you have the root of the matter, the life of grace. You may herd amongst the sheep now, and be found amongst goats at last. A king will give his subjects liberty to travel into another king's dominions, reserving their loyalty to their own prince. Papists, in Queen Elizabeth's days, being commanded to go to church, or be punished, sent to the Pope for a solution of this case of conscience. His answer was, You may comply; but, "my son, give me thy heart."* Thus the devil will give you leave to read, pray, hear, and attend on ordinances; but as long as he holds you fast by the heart-strings, you are still his slaves, you are none of God's servants: for the soul is the man. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he," Prov. xxiii. 7. As a man's principles are stated, so he receives his denomination, good or bad, a Jew or a heathen, a saint or a brute. If you have a brute's heart in the shape of a man, God will esteem you no better than a brute. It is the saying of a learned man, "Some make an image of the living God hewn out of the stock of a dead tree: but the new creature is not such a lifeless thing as many imagine." It is the spirit of "power, of love, and of a sound mind,"† 2 Tim. i. 7. This text, saith a good divine,‡ doth express the three parts of God's image in the new creature; certainly this vital principle hath a strong and vigorous

* Fili, da mihi cor.

† Πνεῦμα δυνάμεως, ἀγάπης, καὶ σωφρονισμοῦ.

‡ Baxter's Life of Faith, page 122.

movement God-wards, and against sin. It is a holy spark, rising upwards to God, and forwards straight for heaven. Most professors are mistaken here; though ministers are oft calling on you to look about you, we tell you, there is a deception in the case. Counterfeit coin is common; our warnings now will be thought of another day, these frequent summons will ring in your ears, our sermons will have a repetition in this, or in another world. Conscience will gall you, and you cannot plead ignorance, or say, *non putâram*, I had not thought of such a day. How often do we tell you of the danger of dying in your natural state, and of that sulphureous lake, in which thousands are suffering, who once lived as securely as you now do, and who are in a hopeless, helpless eternity? and how can you tell but this may be the last day, the last warning or overture of grace, the last knock at your door? God may say, Away, begone out of my sight, take him, devil, I will no more be troubled with such a sinner. But if after all this, you be senseless and lie still, you are dead, twice dead.

But let me rather persuade you from the advantage it will be to all sorts of persons, of every age and relation, to look after this change denominated in scripture, a new creation.

Oh! if you are advancing in years, going off the stage of the world, dropping into the grave and eternity, if you have been long here, and not yet spiritually alive, begin at last to turn over a new leaf; seek a new life, that you may have comfort, and not terror in your expiring moments: yet there is hope, God still waits to be gracious, and stands knocking at your door. Rise out of your bed of sloth, put back the bar, admit him with all his graces; make out with this change against your last change.

Young people, that have lately stepped into the world, and gone thus far before you know where you are, it may be, young in years, but old in sin, you are entering into a wicked world, with wicked hearts. Oh! look after this blessed antidote, which may prevent infection; be sure of a pilot that may row you through this boisterous sea safe to the haven. Without

new hearts you will make this bad world worse, and become worse by it; rather seek to amend it.

You that are entering into callings, or on a change of condition, without this, you will be fit for nothing; without this, you will bring a curse into every relation and vocation; but this will make you fit for any thing, and in all you set about, you will be attended with God's blessing.

You, unmarried persons, I recommend it to you, that you be sure to marry in the Lord, then you will be heirs together of the grace of life: and pray and praise God together, you will have the sweet relation perfumed, and will meet in glory.

You, rich persons, are beggars without this; this will make you rich and honourable, the excellent in the earth, God's jewels, the favourites of heaven. And you, poor, that cannot get daily bread, this will make you rich in faith, heirs of a kingdom. O what a treasure is this fear of the Lord!

You, poor Athenians, that are always inquiring after news, new opinions, new inventions, new fashions, here is a fine and blessed piece of novelty for you; this new creature will stand you in stead, not so much to please your itching ears, as to profit your languishing souls.

Well, I have done my poor endeavour, to effect this work upon your hearts. But when we have said and done all we can, we have done nothing at all, except the eternal Jehovah accompany our efforts with the power of his grace. O thou infinite, Almighty God, who "hast made the earth by thy power, hast established the world by thy wisdom, and stretched out the heavens by thy discretion," Jer. x. 12. Look into the hearts of sinners, see what a chaos of confusion is by sin brought into the whole soul; go over thy work again, mend what sin hath marred, put light in the understanding, power into the will, rectitude into the affections, make conscience do its office. O that corruption may be mortified, Satan cast out, a sound principle introduced, the soul renewed and everlastingly saved.

I commend these my poor labours into the hands of God, to use them as he sees good; and to you who have heard these sermons, and to others that shall take the pains to read them, whether the effect answer my pains and aims, or not, having delivered my conscience, with some degree of uprightness. In this labour of love, I am willing to take my leave of the world, and commend you, my brethren, to God, and "to the word of his grace, which is able to" renew your hearts, and "build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified," Acts xx. 32; which is the daily prayer of,

A poor watchman for your souls,

OLIVER HEYWOOD.

May 3rd. 1695.

A

NEW CREATURE.

GALATIANS VI. 15.

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

CHAP. I.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

SOME interpreters think that this text is not introduced as a proof of the immediately preceding assertion, of the apostle's "glorying in the cross of Christ, and his being crucified to the world," verse 14; but rather that it forms a conclusion of the main doctrine delivered in this epistle, namely, "That a sinner is not justified by the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ," as if he had said,—I urge this first and last with the greatest earnestness and importunity;* let Jews and Judaizing Christians say what they will or can, this I confidently affirm, that now in the gospel state, as settled by Christ, it is of no great moment whether a man be a Jew or a Gentile. It is true, under the law there was something of privilege in circumcision, as it was a badge of God's covenant with Abraham's seed, and the uncircumcised were strangers to the covenants of pro-

* Hoc est quod dico et repeto, et extremis verbis contendo.

mise and had no right to church membership: but now in the gospel, God is the God of the believing Gentiles, as well as of the Jews; for there is not one God in the Old Testament, and another in the New, as the Manichees dreamed, but "it is one God, that shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith," Rom. iii. 29, 30; that is, both one way, if only they be sincere believers, for God regards not any for being circumcised, nor rejects any for the want of it, but looks at real sanctification of heart and life.

This is a sound and apposite connection of the words; but Calvin subjoins them to the foregoing verse. The reason why the blessed apostle is crucified to the world, and the world to him, is because in Christ to whom he is united, the chief thing available is a new creature, other things are insignificant: the truth of this the apostle had before demonstrated, because the gospel truth makes void legal figures:* thus both interpretations come to the same thing.

It is observable, that this phrase is three times used, with different conclusions. 1 Cor. vii. 19, "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God." Again, Gal. v. 6, "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love:" and in this passage, "but a new creature." They all combine in this one sense, that in the New Testament dispensation by Christ, no privileges are efficacious to the salvation of the soul without an operative faith accompanied with a principle of grace in the heart, and a holy life agreeable to the rule of God's holy word. Thus there is a due consistency

* Quia scilicet, veritas evangelii omnes legis figuras absorbeat, et exaniniat.

in these necessary qualifications: for in spiritual means, marks, methods of salvation, there is a blessed combination, affinity, and concatenation; not a link of this golden chain can be wanting; the true religion is of one piece, there is no loose joint, but all the parts make up one entire body and complete system of christianity.

But to come to the words, in which we have the negative and positive parts of our religion,—wherein it doth not consist, and wherein it doth. Suppose men had excellent privileges, and choice advantages, these would not of themselves attain the important end, namely, God's glory and man's happiness.

By this word, *in Christ Jesus*, some understand in the christian religion; others, in the church or kingdom of Christ; others, in the gospel dispensation, in the concern of obtaining salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ.* The doctrine of the gospel is called the faith of Jesus Christ, Rom. iii. 22, wherein and whereby the glorious design of saving sinners by Jesus Christ, doth eminently and evidently appear: it is called "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6. "And he hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel," or through the gospel, 2 Tim. i. 10.

Circumcision was to the Jews a seal of the righteousness of faith, Rom. iv. 11, a badge and criterion, whereby an Israelite was distinguished from other people, as belonging to God's peculiar heritage: it both engaged to duty, and entailed many privileges. See Rom. ix. 4.

By its not *availing any thing*, is signified its ineffectualness to attain these two great objects: first, the justifying of a sinner before God; secondly, the eternal salvation of the soul. Not that I think the new creature

* In negotio salutis obtinendæ per Christum.

justifies, as I shall shew hereafter, but it is in a justified person, and these external privileges avail not to our justification, nor does the want of them hinder it; but in this case, "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all," Col. iii. 11. Hence observe,

First, That the richest privileges and most splendid profession avail no man, without being a new creature.

The Jews boasted of their privileges, and by consequence, gospel professors are apt to pride themselves on what they think to be of great worth, but they all signify nothing in the sight of God, if they be not new creatures. Men may please themselves with external shows, professions, or privileges, as to be born of godly parents, to be baptized, living under pure and powerful ordinances, associating with the best people in the purest churches, sitting down at the Lord's supper, making credible profession, performing religious duties; yea, suffering much for the religion of God: all these together will not avail a person, as it respects his eternal happiness, without being a new creature. Mistake me not, I do not say, but these are good in their places, and great mercies and duties. Here consider,

1. Things that hinder or oppose the new creature, are hurtful in their own nature, and to be laid aside, as sin and the old man, Eph. iv. 22.

2. Things that further not this new creature in our hearts, are comparatively useless, though lawful, as the profits, pleasures, and honours of this world.

3. Things that do further the growth of the new creature by God's appointment, are not of themselves sufficient to attain their end, without the concurrence of divine grace: as preaching, prayer, and seals—they are but means.

4. Things good in themselves may, by man's abuse, prove rather snares and hindrances, than helps and furtherances in heaven's road: circumcision was once good and God's ordinance, but when some Judaizers affirmed, that "except Christians were circumcised after the manner of Moses, they could not be saved," Acts xv. 1, 9, 10,—the apostles come to this decision, "that God puts no difference between Jews and Gentiles," and that this "was a yoke that neither they nor their fathers were able to bear:" and so it was not only laid aside as other legal ceremonies, which became not only dead, but deadly; * so the apostle affirms, "that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing," Gal. v. 2. Nay, the best duties, ordinances, and privileges rested in, short of Christ, will rather ruin, than raise us; undo us, than enrich us with grace here, or glory hereafter: see Rom. ix. 31, 32. x. 3.

But this is a great truth, that all the privileges in the world, without this new creature, can never of themselves render a soul acceptable to God, or bring it to eternal happiness in the enjoyment of God,

(1.) Because such a person may be, and is yet under the old covenant, which brings a curse: and being out of Christ, Gal. iii. 10—13, all that he hath, doth, or enjoyeth, is accursed to him; for every man must either keep the law, and satisfy for the breach of it in his own person,—or another that is able, must do it for him, and that is none but Christ our surety; and Christ doth it not for any but such as by faith have an interest in him. Now he that is not a new creature hath no interest in Christ, "for if any man be in Christ," that is, related to Christ, entitled to him, "he is a new creature," 2 Cor. v. 17. And he that is not

* Mortuæ sed mortiferæ.

grafted into this true vine, and doth not "partake of the root and fatness of this olive-tree, can bear no fruit, John xv. 1, 5. Rom. xi. 17,—can do nothing to any purpose, nor improve any privilege to his spiritual profit, for he is a dead branch cast forth and withered, and thrown into the fire, John xv. 6. Though he be in Christ by profession, yet because he is not planted in Christ, by possession of him, he is a woful cast-away,—he is grafted in a wrong stock, to be fruitful here, or to shoot up as high as heaven at last. Now, we cannot be accepted but in the Beloved, Eph. i. 6: and without faith in Christ it is impossible to please God, Heb. xi. 6; for "the first man Adam was made a living soul," and by his fall, himself and his posterity are become dead, condemned sinners, "but the last Adam is made a quickening Spirit," that is, Christ becomes a principle of life to all his spiritual offspring, and he will own none but such: see 1 Cor. xv. 45—49.

(2.) Because such souls want the sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit: and we find that "the offering up of the Gentiles is only acceptable, by being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, Rom. xv. 16. God will own nothing from men, but what hath the breathings of the Spirit in it; "For God knoweth the mind of the Spirit," Rom. viii. 26, 27. The least indication thereof in his children, though but a groaning that cannot be uttered, is accepted of God; but the most eloquent rhapsodies, and loudest vociferations of graceless souls, are rejected by the Lord; "For if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," Rom. viii. 9, 11, 14: here we read of the Spirit of God dwelling in believers; and "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they," and indeed none else, "are the sons of God." God will own none for his, but those

that have this stamp, this seal upon them; so 2 Cor. i. 22, "Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts;" and this is the "earnest of our inheritance," Eph. i. 13, 14. Now all external ordinances, privileges, and performances, amount not to this: and the Scripture tells us, that "he is not a Jew (that is, a sincere Christian, for it is an Old Testament title given to a New Testament believer,) that is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh, but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God," Rom. ii. 28, 29. Here we see the life of our religion; the tree must first be good, or it can never bring forth good fruit: working results from the being of a thing.* If men be not good, they can never do good: now it is not any thing external that can make persons good, it must be "the hidden man of the heart" that constitutes a person good, 1 Pet. iii. 4. So reason makes a man, not jewels or outward ornaments: thus grace constitutes a Christian, not outward privileges. As nothing that is "without a man, can defile a man," Mark vii. 15, so nothing without can cleanse him.

Is this so, that the richest privileges, and most splendid profession, avail not any man, except he be a new creature? Then it follows,

1. That religion consists not in negatives, but positives. It is false arguing to say,—I am not a Jew, nor a Turk, nor heathen, and therefore am a good Christian. Nay, it is not enough to say I am no swearer, drunkard, or whoremonger, and therefore am a saint good enough: this was the fallacy of the Pharisee, Luke xviii. 11, "God I thank thee, that I am not as other

* Operari sequitur esse.

men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." Alas, this would not do; God disowned him. Christianity consists in something positive: "Little children," saith the apostle, "let no man deceive you, he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous," 1 John iii. 7. "Christ becomes the author of eternal salvation unto all them," and only them, "that obey him," Heb. v. 9. Alas! persons may gull and beguile themselves with airy notions and speculations of free grace, Christ's merits, and trusting God, and so build castles in the air, which will drop with them into hell; for without practical godliness, they will be deceived, and die with a lie in their right hand. Mistake not, I say not that free grace, or Christ's blood, is but a fancy, or that a soul can be saved without them, or he that believeth with a sincere gospel faith shall miss of heaven; but many catch at these, and espouse a mere chimera, a fancy or airy notion, while they have not a principle of grace in their hearts, or the power of godliness in their lives. I may say with the apostle, "Can faith save thee? No, no, such a faith without works is dead," James ii. 20, 26. And being lifeless, it is lost, thou must have something that hath existence.

2. That christianity doth not lie in mere externals. If men have no more religion than is visible to others, they have not that which will serve their purpose. True godliness is a hidden, mystical thing; "Our life is hid with Christ in God," Col. iii. 3. It is a pearl in the shell; it is a hidden spring that moves the visible hand. God's children are "hidden ones," Psalm lxxxiii. 3; kings in disguise, "It appears not yet what they shall be," 1 John iii. 2. The best and worst of a real saint is not obvious to men's view: "The king's daughter is all glorious within," Psalm xlv. 13. If

privileges and profession did constitute a saint, we might infallibly tell who should be saved; but a child of God hath two sides, one God-wards, another men-wards. A merchant's wares are in back shops: the best goods are often out of sight. "In the hidden parts," saith David, "thou shalt make me to know wisdom," Psalm li. 6. Hypocrites are "painted sepulchres, that outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness," Matt. xxiii. 27. You must look at internal principles, not at external professions or privileges.

3. There is such a thing as nominal, without real christianity; some have "a name to live, but are dead," Rev. iii. 1; have high titles, but bad hearts, and vicious lives; they "profess they know God, but in works they deny him," Tit. i. 16. They have heaven in their mouths, and hell in their minds; they soar high, but design low; there may be a real heathen under a Christian name. All church members are not members of Christ;* they are not all Israel that are of Israel, Rom. ix. 6. A fine title may be on some boxes that have nothing within to correspond. Judah that was uncircumcised in heart, may be ranked with Egypt, Edom, Moab, Ammon; Jer. ix. 26. Some may cry out, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord," The church, the church, they are right church members, that yet do wickedly, and think their privileges will excuse them, as though thereby "they were delivered to do all manner of abominations," Jer. vii. 4. 10. They shall know one day, that an empty name without the thing, is but a great crime, that it will rather aggravate their condemnation than tend to their salvation. Alas! how many are providential, not principled Christians, that have nothing

* Ad ecclesiam non pertinent omnes qui sunt intus.

more to plead for their christianity than that they were born in a christian country, and in their infancy were baptized, having since done as other people do, gone to church, and behaved civilly, and passed amongst others for downright honest men. But God judgeth not as man judgeth; when persons stand before the awful tribunal of the righteous Judge, names, and titles, and privileges, will signify nothing; such varnish will melt off before the fire of God's wrath; nothing then will signify but the inner garment of sanctification, and the upper garment of Christ's righteousness for our justification, to cover all defects of the former. This is "fine linen, clean and white; this is the righteousness of saints," Rev. xix. 8.

4. Yet privileges are not to be slighted, nor ordinances to be despised. As you are not to rest in circumcision or baptism, as though this were enough, so you are not to cast off God's institutions, as if they were of no worth, there is a medium betwixt an abuse and total neglect; men may abuse meat and drink, yet must not lay them aside. Ordinances can do us no good without the concurrence of divine grace; "man lives not by bread only, but by God's blessing therewith," Deut. viii. 3; must bread be thrown away on this pretence? surely no, it becomes us to obey God in hearing, praying, reading, meditating and attending on God in his own ways; the seals of the covenant are not insignificant ceremonies; ordinances are channels, through which God conveys his grace to the soul;* these are "golden pipes through which the olive branches empty the golden oil out of themselves," Zech. iv. 12. Shall the bucket be thrown away because it hath not water in itself, without letting it down into the well,

* Canales gratiæ.

by the chain of faith? Shall the boat be slighted, because of itself it cannot carry us over the river? rather let us get into it and row, and wait for the gales of the Spirit to waft us over. Privileges are good, the fruits of Christ's purchase, the pledges of God's love; they must be made use of, though not trusted or made our boast; you should be very thankful and fruitful under pure and powerful ordinances; let God have the glory, look you after the advantage of privileges, set them in their own place, not in God's room; let none say, "the table of the Lord is contemptible," Mal. i. 7. Nor on the other hand, let not presuming souls say, "let us fetch the ark of the covenant, that it may save us," 1 Sam. iv. 3. Alas, what can the ark of God avail us, if the God of the ark leave us? Let our dependance be on God in the way of his appointments. Affect not to be above, but go beyond all ordinances; God is present in all, that we may despise none, he withdraws in some, sometimes in all, that we may idolize none; when you enter upon a duty, look up to the blessed Jesus, make it your business to get communion with God therein. If you miss of God in ordinances, you lose your end; yea, you are in danger of losing your souls. If you find God, glory in the Lord, boast not of the duty or ordinances; sit not down in the porch, but make forward to the holy of holies; press to the city of refuge, lay your sacrifices at the door of the tabernacle, put your offering into the high priest's hand; thank God for enlargements, but depend not on them. If you make your services your saviours, you will perish with them; when you have done all, say, "I am still an unprofitable servant," Luke xvii. 10; I have but done my duty, nay, I have not done my duty, my best righteousnesses are not only too scant a covering, but also filthy rags, Isa. lxiv. 6. My very duties as well

as sins may undo me; I may even find hell torments the upshot of privileges; further advancement by privileges, through a non-improvement of them sinks deeper in hell, as in the case of Chorazin and Capernaum, Matt. xi. 21—24. For privileges to graceless souls do take away the cloak that might cover the foulness of sin, and so do rather aggravate than extenuate it, John xv. 22, 24. I must therefore look for something else than privileges, that is, a new creature.

CHAP. II.

THE NATURE OF A NEW CREATURE.

THE main point in the text, and which I have principally in view, is concerning the new creature, κτίσις καινὴ, new creation, it is a mode of speech peculiar and proper to the new testament dispensation; 2 Cor. v. 17, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," that is, if a man be a true Christian, formed to the gospel pattern and rule, he is, and must be, and cannot but be of a new frame and character. So it was prophesied of old concerning gospel times; "Behold the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare," Isa. xlii. 9; lxv. 17, "Behold, I create new heavens, and new earth; yea, all things new." So here he frames a work of saving grace in the hearts of all his saints. It signifies a new, noble, heavenly disposition, opposed to the antiquated, corrupt state of nature, derived from the first Adam, called the old man. But it may be asked,

1. Why is this called a creature? I answer,

(1.) Because it is produced only by the almighty power of God, whose peculiar prerogative it is to create.

(2.) Because as a creature, it hath a real existence as this visible frame of the universe hath. If there be a heaven and earth, there is a new creation in the soul of man; it is no fiction, chimera, or imagination of man's brain.

(3.) Creation makes a mighty change, so doth this work of conversion; as creation changeth a thing from a non-existence to a real being, so by this work of grace, "Old things are past away, and all things become new." But of this more hereafter. You may ask,

2. What is meant by new? In reply I may say,

(1.) New, in scripture language, signifies another, distinct and different from what was before; so Exod. i. 8, "There arose a new king over Egypt," that is, another. Thus this new creature is distinct from the former, as Caleb is said to have another spirit, Numb. xiv. 24, that is, a different nature from the rest of the spies; even from what he himself formerly had. Thus it is with the convert.

(2.) New signifies strange, not heard of before, Numb. xvi. 30, "If the Lord make a new thing," if the earth open her mouth; an unheard of wonder, a prodigy never known before. So it was said, "What new doctrine is this? thou bringest strange things to our ears," Acts xvii. 19, 20. Thus the work of regeneration was strange, even to a great doctor among the Jews, John iii. 3, 4.

(3.) New, signifies something secret, hidden, not easily discerned, or not manifest to all, Isa. xlviii. 6, "I have shewed thee new things, from this time, even hidden things." And this work of the new creature is much hid from the eyes of others, and sometimes kept close from a man's own observation, Job xi. 6,

"That he would show thee the secrets of wisdom." And David saith, "In the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom," Psal. li. 6.

(4.) New, imports something excellent, transcendent, admirable, Isa. xlii. 10, "Sing unto the Lord a new song;" Psal. xxxiii. 3, "Sing unto him a new song," that is, an excellent song, the very best to which you can attain. Even so this is the chief of God's works in the world, and renders "the righteous more excellent than his neighbour; and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit," Prov. xii. 26. xvii. 27.

The text being thus opened, I shall deduce an observation arising from the preceding words of the text; "circumcision avails nothing, nor uncircumcision," under this new testament dispensation. What is it then that avails? The answer is, the new creature; this indeed is available. So this is set in contradistinction to the forementioned privileges comprehended under the word circumcision. I observe, then,

Secondly, That a new creature only is every way available to the souls of men.

Nothing else can avail any thing to men's eternal salvation, but a new creature; and this is very available.

Understand this of things of the same kind or nature; for a new creature must not be set in competition with the eternal love of God, or blood of Christ, or sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit, for application of Christ's purchase to us. A new creature is but a creature, and cannot do the work of the infinite God, who hath appropriated salvation work to himself; "There is no Saviour besides me, where is any other that may save them?" Hos. xiii. 4, 10. It is not any thing done by man, or wrought in man, that can save him from divine wrath, or advance him to

heaven: No, the Lord justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies by Christ. All the causes of man's salvation are without him, Eph. i. 4—9. There is the efficient cause, God's choosing us—the material cause, Christ's redeeming us—the formal, the good pleasure of his will—the final, the praise of God's glorious grace. So then, we do not put this new creature in God's room, as any cause at all of our happiness, but a necessary qualification or disposition, to which salvation is annexed, or as the apostle phraseth it, that which accompanieth salvation. Heb. vi. 9, "Things that accompany salvation," ἐχόμενα, that have salvation; that is, comprehend it, are contiguous to it, have happiness annexed to it by the indissoluble connexion of grace and glory, in consequence of a covenant promise. But more of this hereafter.

In the prosecution of this subject, I shall speak to these four things in the doctrinal part of it: namely,

I. Shew what this new creature is.

II. Why it is so called.

III. Wherein it is available.

IV. Answer some queries about it, and then make an application.

I. What is this new creature? Here the names given to it and the nature of it may be considered.

1. The names or titles given to this new creature being synonymous expressions and holding forth the same thing for substance, are such as these:

(1.) It is called the forming of Christ in the womb of a man's heart; Gal. iv. 19, "My little children of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you."

(2.) It is called quickening, Ephes. ii. 1, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Alas! what dull stocks and masses of sin we

are, till animated with the Spirit of grace, and quickened by a vital principle! And this is done with Christ, ver. 5, by his resurrection.

(3.) It is called parturition, or bringing forth by spiritual pangs of soul-travail; it is a new birth. John iii. 3, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Convincing grace brings a lively and lovely offspring into the world, better than the product of nature.

(4.) Such converts are compared to little children, Matt. xviii. 3, "Verily, I say unto you, except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven:" that is, you must needs have the qualities and dispositions both of infants and larger children.

(5.) This work of God on the soul, is called a dying with Christ, and a rising again with him: Rom. vi. 5, "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." All real Christians are risen with Christ, Col. iii. 1; hence it is called the "first resurrection," Rev. xx. 6, as if they were newly brought out of their graves, when they had been long dead and useless.

(6.) It is called the image of God on the soul, Col. iii. 10, "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him." Eph. iv. 24, "The new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." This new creature is a blessed resemblance of the Trinity of persons, in the renewing of the mind, will, and affections, conformable to God.

(7.) It is called a divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the

divine nature;" that is, of those divine qualities, whereby the soul resembles God, not only as a picture doth a man in outward lineaments, but as a child doth his father, both in countenance and condition. As the noble qualities of an immortal soul show that there is a God, so the renewed faculties show what that God is.

So much for the names of this new creature, most of which are figurative expressions, denoting the same thing.

2. For the nature of the new creature, take this description of it.

The new creature is a supernatural work of gospel grace wrought in the soul of a sinner, by the word and Spirit of God, changing the whole man from its old state and course, and thereby transforming it into the divine likeness, and conforming the heart and life to the rule of the word, for the glory of God, and the soul's present and everlasting communion with him: this is the new creature.

I confess this description is long, but I cannot leave out any of its parts.

I shall very briefly discuss the branches of this description.

(1.) With respect to the general nature of it, I call it a supernatural work, for it is above the power of nature to produce it, it comes from above; so he that is "born again," John iii. 3, is ἄνωθεν γενόμενος, "from above." This perfect gift "comes down from the Father of lights," James i. 17. The "Jerusalem that is above is the mother of us all," Gal. iv. 26. This new creature is no herb that grows in nature's garden; it is a plant of paradise: "Flesh and blood cannot so much as reveal this to the sons of men," Matt. xvi. 17. Therefore it is no wonder if learned doctors, such as

Nicodemus, laugh at such doctrine, as whimsical fancies, and say, "How can these things be?" John iii. 9. Or, like Ezekiel's hearers, who saith, "Ah, Lord God, they say of me, Doth he not speak parables?" Ezek. xx. 49. For "such wisdom is too high for a fool," Prov. xxiv. 7. In "God's light only shall we see light." Experience is the best master in these cases. "We speak wisdom," saith the apostle, "among them that are perfect; but the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God," 1 Cor. ii. 6, 14. This new creature is of a celestial origin, and must have a heavenly interpreter.

(2.) In this description, we have the particular nature of this new creature; I speak of it as originating in gospel grace. It is no branch or fruit of the old covenant of works, for the law maketh nothing perfect: "There was no law which could give life," Gal. iii. 2, 21, 22, but the new testament dispensation, called the promise; this only produceth the new creation.

But you may say, had not old testament saints this new creature? Doth not David say, "create in me a clean heart?" Psal. li. 10.

I answer, Old testament saints had a new testament spirit; for "they without us could not be made perfect," Heb. xi. 40. The same gospel belonged to them and us, and was preached to both, Heb. iv. 2; Abraham saw Christ's day, they all partook of gospel grace, John viii. 56, both in justification and sanctification; as having but a different edition of the same gospel covenant; they were as children in minority under tutors and governors, Gal. iv. 1, 2, 25; but gospel saints are as children at age; their state was that of the bond woman of mount Sinai; ours is of Jerusalem, which is free. However, that gospel promise, made known in the old testament, belongs both to them and us; Ezek.

xxxvi. 26, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." This is the uniform, evangelical result under both dispensations; and sincere believers of old had experience of it, though the veil was on the face of Moses, 2 Cor. iii. 14, 15; and on the hearts of carnal Jews, as it is on all unbelievers to this day; but gospel grace renews the soul.

(3.) Here is the subject, in which this new creature is formed, and that is the soul or heart of a sinner. Here is the seat and centre of this new creation; it is not merely external in the eye, or foot, or hand, or tongue; but it is an internal work in the soul, the Christian "is renewed in the spirit of his mind," Eph. iv. 23; "Behold," saith David, "thou desirest truth in the inward parts; in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom," Psal li. 6; it is called, "the hidden man of the heart," 1 Pet. iii. 4. Not but that it discovers itself in lip and life; but the root and spring lie under ground, out of the view of men, as the best treasures are locked up, not exposed to the open view of the world. "A Christian's life is hid with Christ in God," Col. iii. 3: hence they are called, "God's hidden ones," Psal. lxxxiii. 3: and "the king's daughter is all glorious within," Psal. xlv. 13. These gracious souls are like kings in disguise, and it "doth not yet apppear what they shall be," 1 John iii. 2; but when the shell is broken, the pearl will appear; all external changes in men are but as the change of the clothes; this is the change of the man and his manners; for "he is not a Jew that is one outwardly, but inwardly." Right "circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God," Rom. ii. 28, 29. It is wrought by God, and known to God, who alone searches and sees the heart.

(4.) The instrumental, or organical cause of this new man, is the word of God, Rom. i. 16, this is "the power of God to salvation." James i. 18, "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth." 1 Pet. i. 23, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth for ever." The word is the seed, which being sown in the heart, springeth up in obedience, which is the flower and visible product of the new creature. This is properly the gospel word; Moses or the law may bring us to the borders, but Joshua leads us into Canaan; the terrors of the law prepare the way, as John Baptist did, but the word of the gospel is the door of faith, which admits souls, and leads them into the chamber of presence; it is God's method, to form this new man by a powerful gospel ministry; so saith blessed Paul, 1 Cor. iv. 15, "I have begotten you in Jesus Christ through the gospel;" there is the instrument, Paul, *I have begotten you;* the means, *by the gospel;* the author, *Jesus Christ.* "Faith comes by hearing," Rom. x. 17. Prov. viii. 34. Therefore let all continue at the gates of wisdom, expect not this new creation, if you turn your backs on God's institutions.

(5.) The efficient cause is the Holy Ghost, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us," Rom. v. 5. O what a gracious impression doth the Spirit leave upon our hearts! what a sweet perfume doth it breathe into them, causing our love to God and men! How doth this new creature occupy all the faculties of the soul through the operation of the Spirit? This is both a seal and an earnest, "who hath also sealed us," Eph. i. 13, 14; "and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts," 2 Cor. i. 22. All good is conveyed to us by the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, especially this saving good

of conversion; we are "born again of water and of the Spirit," John iii. 3, 8; "sanctified by the Spirit, and are temples of the Holy Ghost," 1 Cor. vi. 11, 19. Nothing can search or reach the heart but the Holy Ghost; "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God," 1 Cor. ii. 10, "and deep things of men." An angel is too short-sighted to see into man's heart, too short-handed to reach the conscience, or make a new creation; God alone turns stone into flesh; "God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem," Gen. ix. 27. It is an act of power to make people willing, Psal. cx. 3, or volunteers. "No man can come to Christ, except the Father which sent him, draw him," John vi. 44. And God exerts the power of his Spirit to attract hearts to himself.

(6.) The proper, immediate effect of this work, is a change into a new frame or course, by which the sinner becomes new, or another than what he was before; this is the genuine necessary attendant;* yea, intrinsic nature of that which we call the new creature. 2 Cor. v. 17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." The faculties are the same, but new qualties are put in; as in a lute, the strings are the same, but it is set to a new tune; in a river, the water is the same, but it is turned into a new channel, the ball hath got a new impulse; so the convert said to the tempting harlot, I am not I;† or as Paul said of himself, "who was before a blasphemer, a persecutor; but I obtained mercy," 1 Tim. i. 13, that is, converting grace hath changed me. Thus the same apostle saith of the Corinthians, "Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified," 1 Cor. vi. 11. O what a mighty change doth grace make! from lying

* Formalis ratio. † Ego non sum ego.

to fearing an oath; from vain speaking, to holy discourse; from carelessness, to the greatest concernedness about soul affairs; yea, "from darkness to light," Eph. v. 8; "from death to life; from Satan to God," Acts xxvi. 18. The man is now got into a new world, as one observes from Ezek. xi. 19, "I will give them one heart;" which that I may do, I will cast it anew, in order to this, I will melt and soften it, as one that hath many pieces of old silver by him, casts them into the fire, melts them, and molds them into one lump. Thus doth God with the divided heart in renewing it, and framing it for his use.

7. Here is yet further the completeness of this change; it is not merely some external acts, exercises, or conversation, not only internal cogitations, affections, or workings of the will and conscience; but the description goes further, even to the state, constitution, and relation of the man; and therefore I add, *changing the whole man from an old state to a new;* for every man and woman hath a state before God; therefore Paul sends Timothy, "to know the state of the Philippians," Phil. ii. 19. This imports not a transient act, but a settled abiding frame, a continued relation; sinners "are by nature children of wrath," Eph. ii. 3: agents of Satan, heirs of hell. This new mold makes them children of God, members of Christ, heirs of heaven; yea, it puts them into an habitual tendency towards heaven, and heavenly things, which is a kind of second nature in them; this moves the holy soul, (acting like itself) as naturally upwards, as a stone moves downward, therefore it is called a divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4; the acting follows the being of a thing; "Make the tree good, and the fruit will be good." Matt. xii. 33. If a watch be not well made, it will never go well; they say of the peacock, roast him as much as you will,

yet when cold, his flesh will be raw again, so force a carnal heart to the highest strain of seeming piety, yet it will come to its old complexion, because there is not a new nature; fill a pond full of water, it will abate if there be not a spring to supply it. The new creature is united to Christ, "and receives grace for grace," John i. 16.

(8.) We have here also, the pattern, copy, or example, according to which this new creature is moulded, *it is the soul's being transformed into the divine likeness.* This image of God consists in knowledge in the intellectual faculties, righteousness in the will, holiness in the affections; Col. iii. 10, "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him." Eph. iv. 24, "That you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness; or holiness of truth." As the work of grace in the heart is a true copy, or transcript of the divine image, they agree as the face in the glass doth, with the face of the man that looks in it, or as the image in the wax with the sculpture on the seal, from which it is derived. Godliness is godlikeness; the sum and substance of our religion is to imitate him whom we worship;* not that it is possible to be like God with a perfection of degree, but in sincerity: "Be ye perfect, as your father in heaven is perfect," Matt. v. 48. A child hath the parts of a man, though not the size; for the new creature is in a daily increase, and tendeth to perfection, as a small seed hath virtually the bulk of a grown tree, though little in itself; but the Christian is like God; man only can beget a man like himself, so the Spirit only doth create the Christian like God. Now divines,† take notice of a

* Summa religionis est imitari quem colis.

† Journal Christian, Part 2. page 173.

double likeness; a bare similitude, snow and milk are both white alike, yet are not the image one of another. Again, representation given of another, and so the picture which is drawn every line from the face of a man, is properly the image of a man, after whose likeness it is made. Thus by holiness, the Christian becomes the image of Christ; Rom. viii. 29, "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son."

(9.) Here is the rule of this new creature, which is expressed, by *turning the heart and life to the rule of the word*; this either refers to the manner of framing the new creature, or the rule by which the new creature acts and moves being once formed. As to the former, the new creature receives the stamp, signature, and impression of the word; Rom vi. 17, "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you;" or as it is more properly in the Greek, εἰς ὃν παρεδόθητε τύπον διδαχῆς, into which you were delivered; that is, the soul is the metal, the word is the mould, into which the sinner is cast, thereby he receives a new stamp, is formed into a new shape, which naturally terminates in a new course of life, according to scripture rule. This immediately after my text, ver. 16, is called the canon, or rule of the new creature; for it is added, "As many as walk according to this rule, or canon, τῷ κανόνι τούτῳ, peace be on them." This is that cynosure or square that architects have in their operations for levelling the stones and timber suitably, that all the parts of the edifice may agree in a just proportion;* thus must, thus will the Christian do, his desire and design is to lie square to the word of God, to "have respect to all God's commandments,"

* Ut singulæ partes justâ symmetriâ cohærent.—*Calv. in loc.*

Psal. cxix. 6; "To walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless," Luke i. 6.

Every child of God is taught by God to walk by rule. All callings have their proper rule; the physician studies Galen; the lawyer his Littleton; the philospher his Aristole and Plato; yet in all professions men may vary in their methods, in the same calling, because no rule is so perfect, to which another may not add something; but the standing rule of God's word is perfect, Psal. xix. 7; "able to make the man of God perfect," 2 Tim. iii. 17. Nothing must be added to it, or taken from it. The Christian is both drawn and determined by its authority, more than by a whole team of human arguments.

(10.) And lastly, here is the end of this new creature, which is twofold, first, *the glory of God;* and secondly, *the soul's present and everlasting communion with him.* Both these are wrapped up together, and are very consistent; yea, cannot be separated. Now God's glory is promoted by the new creature, in this world, and in the other.

[i.] In this world the new creature only is capable of glorifying God; such a soul is planted in Christ the true vine, and "glorifies God by bringing forth much fruit," John xv. 8. "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God," Phil. i. 11. The chief design of the true Christian and the new creature, is to promote the glory of God, actively and passively; this is the first petition in the Lord's prayer; and the first right step the converted soul takes heaven-ward; he is content to be villified, so that God may be glorified; and if God be glorified by others, whatever become of him, he rejoiceth, as Paul, in the preaching

of Christ by others, to preach down his credit, Phil. i. 18.

[ii.] In the next world also, this new creature will form an illustrious monument to the glory of Jehovah, "When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe," 2 Thess. i. 10. The existence of this new creation will reflect more glory to the author than that of the old one. O what a glorious sight will it be to see so many bright stars in the firmament of glory, borrowing their light from, and reflecting light to the Sun of righteousness!

Besides, the new creature is the only person on earth that is qualified for communion with God; he only can say, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John i. 3. It is this new creation that raiseth this clod of clay above the earth, and engageth the heart to approach to God, while others "worship afar off," Jer. xxx. 21. Exod. xxiv. 1. These holy souls are they that worship in the "temple of God, and at the altar," Rev. xi. 1. Psal. cxlviii. 14. God admits them into his presence, as a people near to him. The Christian is the man who sanctifies God's name in his worship, and is satisfied with the fatness of God's house. Here is the blessed merchant that trades in rich pearls, that goes from port to port, from ordinance to ordinance; not to see places, but to take in his lading of communications, graces, privileges, assurance, and comfort from God.

CHAP. III.

REASONS FOR THE DENOMINATION, NEW CREATURE. A PARALLEL BETWEEN THE OLD CREATION AND THE NEW.

II. It is now my province briefly to assign reasons, why the Holy Ghost gives this saving conversion the title of a "new creature," or, as the word is, a "new creation." Now the answer is, because in many things it bears some analogy and resemblance to the first spacious universe of heaven and earth, this magnificent structure. I shall run the parallel between them in these twelve particulars:

1. God is the first and only cause of the creation of the world, not angels nor created intelligences of any rank, who though they be mighty, yet are not Almighty. It is the peculiar prerogative of Elohim, the infinite God, to create. God orders the Jews in Babylon to repeat that famous sentence in the Chaldee language, to confute their idolatry, Jer. x. 11, "Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens." The reason is given in the Hebrew language, ver. 12, "He hath made the earth by his power; he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion." In creation, divines say, God is the only cause simply, but in his other works, he is the cause of this creature being different from that.* So none but God can create this new man; "Have we not all one Father? hath not one great God created us? We are God's workmanship, it is the same

* Deus est causa simpliciter in creatione, at essendi hoc in aliis.—*Vide Weems's Image of God in Man, page* 3.

mighty power that raised Christ from the dead that gives faith to the souls of men, and quickens the dead."

2. God made all things of nothing, that is, of things that had no existence before he made them. "He calleth those things which be not, as though they were."* Indeed we are told that *nothing* is taken in a threefold sense.

(1.) It is taken privatively, so an idol is nothing; that is, it hath no divinity in it.

(2.) Comparatively, so all the world is nothing before God.†

(3.) Nothing negatively or simply; so there was no fruit upon the fig-tree.‡ In this sense God made the world of nothing; there was no pre-existent matter for him to work upon. Just thus in the new creation, when God comes to operate upon a sinner, he finds no principle of grace or inclination to good in him. "I know," saith blessed Paul, "that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing," Rom. vii. 18. Nay, there is much evil in us; even worse still, there is antipathy to what is good, within our depraved hearts. Thus, as in the first creation, God produceth a habit from the negation; he works a principle of grace where there was no such thing.

3. God made all things by Christ, his infinite and co-eternal Son. "All things were made by him," that is, by the essential word, "and without him was not any thing made that was made," John i. 3. "By him were all things created, visible and invisible." By this Heir of all things he made the worlds, both according to the matter and form thereof, Col. i. 16. Heb. i. 2. And thus it is in the new creation, for "we

* Mal. ii. 10. Eph. ii. 10. i. 20. Rom. iv. 17.
† 1 Cor. viii. 4. Isa. xl. 17. ‡ Mark xi. 13.

are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works," Eph. ii. 10. After him the new creature is formed; for God in his unveiled majesty is invisible, not obvious clearly either to corporeal eyes or human minds, but Christ is the express image of his person, Heb. i. 3; and manifests the glorious perfections of the infinite God: that "as we have borne the image of the earthly Adam, we should bear the image of the heavenly," 1 Cor. xv. 45, 49, that is Christ; thus in the incarnation, God became man; in regeneration, man becomes like God.

4. God created all things with a word: so saith the apostle, "Through faith we understand, that the worlds were framed by the word of God," Heb. xi. 3. God's *fiat*, or let it be, produced the whole fabric of heaven and earth. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them, by the breath of his mouth," Psal. xxxiii. 6. Art needeth many helps; nature needeth few; God needeth none, nor doth use any instrument in the creation, for nothing can intervene between the first cause and the first effect; it is an immediate product of his sovereign will and pleasure. So it is in this new creation; James i, 18, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." God speaks the word, and the sinner is converted. If it be said, that ministers are instruments in conversion, I answer, but still they are nothing, "neither is he that planteth any thing," 1 Cor. iii. 7. They need God; God needs not them, he can do his work without them; yea, in the first infusion of a principle of saving grace, there is nothing of instrumentality, it is done immediately.

5. God made all things good and perfect at first. Every creature of God is good; and God saw every

thing that he had made, and behold it was very good ;* nothing was made either unadvisedly or to no purpose.† A thing may be said to be good, as it is correspondent to the idea of the divine wisdom, or as it is fit for that use to which it is designed, and for which it serves. It needs not be enquired, whether God could not have made the world, or its parts, better or more perfect ; for if we consider the world in respect of the whole, it is perfect both as to its degrees and parts. But as to its parts severally, God could have made them better ; as in a camp, there are captains, soldiers, and a general ; in some respect if a soldier were a captain, he would be better, but in respect of the whole army, which consists of superiors and inferiors, he is better as a soldier. So in this new creature, it is perfect in its kind, in subserviency to God's great purposes, though defective in point of degree in this world ; hence God's children are said to be not perfect, as "having not attained," Phil. iii. 12. "yet they are perfect," ver. 15.

6. Though God from eternity purposed to create the world, yet the world was created only in time, not from eternity ; Gen. i. 1, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. God worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will," Eph. i. 11. It is true, all things had a kind of being in God, as in the cause whence all things flow, in the eternal mind or idea according to which all things were framed ; but they had not their real or actual existence, till God in his wisdom thought good to produce them. "In thy book," saith David, Psal. cxxxix. 16, "were all my members written." Thus it is in

* 1 Tim. iv. 4. Gen. i. 31.

† Quia nec temere nec frustra factum.

this new creation; God hath a book of life, and such as are in the book of life, will in time be savingly converted, called, sanctified, justified, and glorified. Thus runs the golden chain, Rom. viii. 29, 30. "As many as were ordained to eternal life, believe." All such as "the Father gives to Christ, shall come to him," John vi. 37. "He hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy," Eph. i. 4. So then this new creation in time, is the result and effect of God's determination before all time. See 2 Thess. ii. 13.

7. The creation of the world was gradual, both as to time, and as to manner. In point of time, God made the world in six days, Gen. i. Not but that God could have despatched all in a moment, but for sundry weighty reasons he took every day a moment to do the work of that day in. Thus God is perfecting this new creation all the time of a Christian's life; and for his manner or method of working, God proceeded from imperfect to perfect: first, God made a confused chaos, then he formed the elements,* then what ariseth from them. First, he made things without life, then things having life. Man, that was the master-piece of the whole creation, he made the last. Even thus doth grace proceed in the new creation; he first forms a chaos, having some confusion of spirit from a legal work, at the commencement "comes a spirit of bondage," to fear, "then a spirit of adoption,"† first, some glimmering light in the mind, then the day star ariseth in the soul; and the "sun of righteousness comes with healing under his wings."‡ The grace of God grows till the Christian comes unto a perfect man,

* Orta ex elementis.

† Rom. viii. 15.

‡ 2 Pet. i. 19. Mal. iv. 2.

"unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.*

8. The first thing that God created was light, Gen. i. 3, 4, "God said, Let there be light, and there was light." In this he proceeds from total privation to habit; it is hard to describe this light, possibly it was a bright lucid body, like the fiery cloud in the wilderness, giving imperfect light, successively moving over the several parts of the earth, and afterwards condensed, increased, perfected, and gathered together in the sun; the apostle applies this to the workings of of God's Spirit in converting a sinner, 2 Cor. iv. 6, "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The first thing a limner draws in a picture is the eye; the first lineament of this gracious new man, is saving knowledge. God will not dwell in a dark house, and therefore first he breaks out windows in his habitation; "without knowledge the heart is not good."† The devil's kingdom is a kingdom of darkness; Christ's of light; converting grace delivers us "from the power of darkness, and translates us into the kingdom of God's dear Son," which is a state of "marvellous light."‡

9. God created some things actually, other things potentially, or virtually, Gen. i. 11, 12, "And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, the tree yielding fruit." Some things were made in their first principles, as from bees came honey; from the vine, grapes, and thence wine; oil, from the olive, &c. Thus it is in the new creation, God plants a seed, a habit of spiritual life, which of its own nature inclines

* Eph. iv. 13. † Prov. xix. 2. ‡ Col. i. 13. 1 Pet. ii. 9.

the Christian to acts of holiness. In every habit there is a propensity to act; so "faith worketh by love," Gal. v. 6. Repentance brings forth "fruits meet for such a principle," Matt. iii. 8. Heavenly acts are the genuine fruits of saving grace, yea, inseparable companions.

10. The same hand that created doth uphold the creature; else it would crumble into its primitive nothing; so "God upholds all things by the word of his power," Heb. i. 3; he doth not as an artificer, who makes a clock, a watch, a ship, or other machine, and leaves it to others to wind it up, or maintain it; but a divine maintenancy is vouchsafed to every creature, which God hath made; creatures are but shadows to the body; or as the reflection of the glass which vanisheth, when the face is turned away; Psal. civ 29, "Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled; thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to the dust." In the chain of second causes, God stands at the commencement, and actuates every part thereof by his influence; "I will hear the heavens, said he, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and wine, and oil, and they shall hear Jezreel."* Thus it is with the new creature, assisting grace supplies and actuates received grace in every duty and exercise, "without Christ we can do nothing;" we must lean upon our beloved every step of the way, or we fall: nothing will go forward without a daily supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.†

11. God had glorious ends in the work of creation. "The Lord made all things for himself," Prov. xvi. 4; for his service and glory. This the four and twenty elders acknowledge, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created

* Hos. ii. 21, 22. † John xv. 5. Cant. viii. 5. Phil. i. 19.

all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created," Rev. iv. 10, 11. All creatures have a tendency towards their origin, and thereby declare that God is their supreme cause and ultimate end; as all rivers come from the sea, and run back into it, Eccl. i. 5—7; every creature leads man to God; "for," Rom. xi. 36, "of him," as the efficient cause, "through him," as the preserving cause, "and to him" as the final cause, "are all things, to whom be glory for ever, Amen;" yea, further, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work," Psal. xix. 1. Every creature hath a legible character of God's power, wisdom, and goodness engraven upon it, and hath a mouth to preach something of the magnificence of its Creator; the visible creature leads man to its invisible Maker; nay further, by that supply which the creature affords to man, it gives him abundant cause of glorifying God; hence saith the apostle, 1 Cor. x. 31, "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Much more doth the new creature work directly to the attaining of God's high and glorious purposes, as might be demonstrated, —by its accomplishing God's pleasure, for holiness is according to his will, 1 Thess. iv. 3.—By working the soul God-wards, it places the affections on things above, Col. iii. 1, 2.—As it evidently displays all God's glorious attributes, being the lively picture of the Deity engraven on the soul.—And doth contribute much to the soul's advancing the glory of God; as we shewed before.

12. The whole creation shall be burnt, 2 Pet. iii. 10, 12, "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up." Not that this glorious structure shall be

annihilated, or turned into its original nothing, I cannot think so; but it shall be purified, refined, and freed from the filthy dregs with which sin hath stained it. So I find Amesius say,* that the elements shall not be quite taken away, but changed, and purified; that the substance shall remain, only the corrupt qualities introduced by sin, shall be purged away;† for,

(1.) In Peter it is said, the heavens and the earth are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment. Now, fire turns combustible matter into its own nature, but doth not quite consume the matter it feeds on, but purifies things; all melting of metals, is not annihilating of them.

(2.) Scripture rather asserts a mutation or changing of these material heavens and earth, than a total abolition; Psal. cii. 25, 26, "Yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment, as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed." The seventy employ ἑλίξεις, thou shalt fold them; and thus the apostle translates this text, Heb. i. 12, "As a vesture shalt fold thou them up, and they shall be changed;" alluding to a garment, or a book, or scroll of parchment, when it is folded up, there are no letters or words visible; thus it passeth away by a notable change.

(3.) The whole creation lies under the curse and sad effects of sin, which by a kind of natural instinct, it longs to be delivered from; see Rom. viii. 20—23, "The whole creation groaneth and travelleth in pain together until now," &c. Calvin saith, there is no element, or part of the world, but is touched with the sense of the creature's misery, and longs for the ex-

* Elementa non erunt sublata, sed mutata et purgata.

† De mundi elementis hoc unum dicam, absumptum iri tantum, ut novam qualitatem induant, manente substantia.—*Calv.* 2 *Peter* iii. 10.

pected resurrection; and surely God will not frustrate its expectation.*

(4.) There is something in the following texts that look this way, Psal. xciii. 1, "The world also is established that it cannot be moved;" Eccl. i. 4, "The earth abideth for ever;" Eccl. iii. 14, "Whatsoever God doth, it shall be for ever;" Psal. cxix. 90, "Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth." All these speak the world's continuance.

But you may say, of what use will heavens and earth then be? I answer,

As an everlasting monument of God's power, wisdom, and goodness, and possibly righteous men shall dwell in this new heaven and earth, and contemplate God in his glorious works; 2 Pet. iii. 13. That new world shall be possessed only by saints, no sinners shall be with them.

Now if we apply all this to this new creation whereof we are treating, it will exactly coincide. Grace shall continue, "He that doth the will of God, shall abide for ever."† This principle is an immortal seed; and shall be cleansed from all dregs of sin, and its consequences; and the spirits of just men "shall be made perfect;" yea, their bodies "shall be made like unto the glorious body of our Lord Jesus;" and though they may pass through the fire, not of Popish purgatory, but of affliction, or of the Spirit's refining, yet they shall lose nothing but dross, and shall come forth as gold.‡

Thus I have run a parallel between the old creation and the new.

* Hunc locum accipio, Nullum esse elementum, nullamve mundi partem, quæ non veluti præsentis miseriæ agnitione tacta in spem resurrectionis intenta sit.

† 1 John ii. 17. ‡ Heb. xii. 23. Phil. iii. 21. 1 Cor. iii. 13.

But this new creation is better, and more difficult than the old.

1. It is better, though the first was perfect in its kind, yet this is more excellent workmanship, being of a more pure, refined, spiritual nature, and repairs what was decayed in the old. It is also brought about with more transcendent love and good will, and hath a reference to the everlasting interests of precious souls in the other world. But of this more anon.

2. This is a creation in some respects more difficult than the former was. It may seem a paradox, that the framing of this new creation in the heart of a sinner, is a greater work, and of more difficulty, than that of making this great universe, heaven and earth; mistake not, this difficulty is not in respect of God's omnipotency, to whom all things are possible and easy; but with respect to the thing itself, and our consideration of it, this appears to our apprehension in these four respects:—

(1.) When God made the world, he met with no opposition; he spake the word, and none uttered any contradiction; but in this new creation, the world, the devil, internal depravity, and sometimes custom in sin oppose this work; the "carnal mind is enmity itself against God," and fights against him, Rom. viii. 7.

(2.) When God made the world, it cost him but the speaking of a word, as has been said; but in order to this new creation, it cost him dear, even the giving of his own Son to become man, to live a life of sorrow, to endure the painful, ignominious, accursed death of the cross, that sinners might be reconciled to God, and become like God.

(3.) When God made the world, he needed not, no, nor used any instruments, in order to the effecting of that work; but in this of the new creation, he sends

ministers labouring, travelling, and long waiting on sinners, to persuade them; he chooses men like themselves, endows them with gifts, gives them compassionate hearts, to weep over others, and beseech them with earnest entreaties to repent; yet that will not do, except the Spirit strive and prevail.

(4.) When God made the world, all was complete in six days; "Heaven and earth were finished," Gen. ii. 1, "and all the host of them;" there needed not a second hand; but he is carrying on this work of the new creation many years, the whole life of the Christian; if he live a hundred years, it will be still defective in point of degree, and never complete, till the soul be landed in heaven.

CHAP. IV.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE NEW CREATURE TO THE SOULS OF MEN.

III. It was further proposed to demonstrate, wherein this new creature is of the first importance to the souls of men.

And here, lest I be mistaken, I must premise two caveats by way of exception: the first refers to the kind; the second, to the end of this availableness.

1. As to the kind, we must beware how we put the new creature in the room of Christ. It is not so available as our blessed Lord Jesus is, who is the only "foundation, on which the church is built," and "able to save to the uttermost:" no creature must be set up

in competition with him, for "there is no salvation in any other."* And herein I am afraid the quakers are guilty of a gross heresy, who call us from a Christ without us, to a Christ within us; yea, it hath been a dispute in the plantation, called Pensylvania, whether we must believe only in a Christ within us, or a Christ both within and without us, and it was carried mostly in the former sense. But let no man be drawn from placing his entire confidence in Christ, as both God and man in one person, who suffered death on the cross to make atonement for sinners, and now "sits on the right hand of God to make intercession for us."—If by a Christ within, they mean that called light within, either free will or natural conscience, or a power to help ourselves without special grace, it is an exploded error; and it is to be feared, the Jesuits deliver their popish doctrine out of these men's mouths in refined language.—If by Christ within, be meant Christ's person in the believer, it is blasphemy. —If intended to signify, "Christ within us, the hope of glory," Col. i. 27, or "Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith," Eph. iii. 17, it is as the sun is in the house, when the beams or rays thereof shine into it. So Christ dwells in souls by his Spirit, Rom. viii. 9, and its graces; and this is what is called the new creature, which however is but a creature, and a weak one, full of imperfections: it is a vein of gold enveloped in earth and dross, not to be trusted to. The bride may highly prize her husband's picture, if like him, and drawn by his hand; but it is ridiculous to dote on that, and slight her husband; and when she wants money or clothes, to go not to her husband for them, but to his picture. Surely, our Lord will not take it well, if men honour his image to the dishonour of his

* 1 Cor. iii. 11. Heb. vii. 25. Acts iv. 12.

person: the original is one thing, the copy is another. Christ, the object of our faith, and the fruit of his Spirit are different: grace in the heart is not so available as Christ in heaven. Let every thing have its due place.

2. That which refers to the end, is this negative, that the new creature is not ordained to have a direct tendency to the justification of a sinner: God did not appoint it for this purpose. The instrument appointed is faith in Christ, Rom. iii. 20—22, in his blood, merits, and satisfaction to divine justice, apprehended by faith alone. And this excludes not only man's merits, but any gracious habits wrought in man, or good works done by him; nay, it also excludes faith itself, as the work of man, any otherwise than as laying hold on Christ's righteousness. This I affirm, that neither the new creature, nor the best inherent righteousness can justify a sinner before God's tribunal. For a "man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ." And lest any should say, it was by the works only of the ceremonial law, it is apparent the apostle includes the moral law; for the Gentiles were never bound to the ceremonial law, yet he proves both "Jews and Gentiles to be both under sin," and both alike justified by Christ in the way of believing; but "where there is no law, there is no transgression." Besides, that law which shews sin, is the moral law; "For by the law is the knowledge of sin."* And it is that law which drives us out of self to Christ, and therefore it can never justify us: God hath nailed up that door, so that none since the fall can enter into happiness by law-righteousness. This way to heaven is like the north west passage to the Indies, whoever attempts it,

* Gal. ii. 16. Rom. iii. 9. ii. 26, 27. iv. 15. iii. 20.

is sure to be frozen up before he gets half way thither. But it may be objected,

If a legal righteousness, produced by our own strength, will not justify a sinner, yet this new creature, or the habit, or exercise of evangelical righteousness will surely justify?

The apostle himself answers, no; and he instanceth in two famous saints in the Old Testament,—the one is Abraham, the other David, Rom. iv. 1, 6. Faithful, holy Abraham, though no idolater, but circumcised, offering his son, must not glory in any habit or acts of grace. And David, though a man after God's own heart, yet saith, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified:" "If the Lord mark iniquity, who can stand?" Holy Paul dares not stand in his own righteousness at God's bar, but "in the righteousness, which is of God by faith."* Indeed this imparted or inherent holiness, was communicated to the soul for other ends than to justify a sinner before God, from the guilt of any one sin; and yet this new creature is very important to the souls of men in these twelve cases:

1. This new creation rectifies the soul's faculties, which were marred by Adam's fall. The former structure, though once a famous edifice, was, in consequence of transgression, not only tottering, but a ruinous house, and lies in rubbish; this new creation re-edifies it in a more stately, sumptuous manner: yea, it is richly adorned thereby: "They shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck." Thereby the Christian "is more excellent than his neighbour," "of an excellent spirit," more excellent than himself was:† he is thus become like the angels,

* Psalm cxliii. 2. cxxx. 3. Phil. iii. 7—9.

† Prov. i. 9. xii. 26. xvii. 27.

yea, like God himself: and though he be short of Adam in the degree of grace, yet upon better ground, in point of duration: and now "great grace" is upon all true believers, Acts iv. 33. Man, by his fall, "became like the beasts that perish," Psalm xlix. 12: but this new creature makes him better than other men. All men are on a level as to God, till this new creation sets a divine stamp on some. "The tongue of the just is as choice silver, but the heart of the wicked is little worth," Prov. x. 20. God only hath sovereignty and authority to rate his creatures: this is the estimate he forms.

2. This new creature is the fruit and evidence of everlasting love; this is the legible print of God's purpose from eternity. "He hath chosen us,—that we should be holy," Eph. i. 4: this is the proper result of free, undeserved grace. Gal. i. 15, God "calls by his grace:" this is the glorious display of his banner of love over the souls of men. In the old creation there was the strength of God's arm; in this there is the working of God's bowels. God found all mankind alike involved in sin and misery, but "grace makes some to differ from others," 1 Cor. iv. 6, 7. As a curious landholder seeing a forest spreading over his ground, marks some trees, designing to make of them some rare pieces of workmanship; thus God carves his own image on a common log, and sets it apart for himself: this is an act of discriminating love, and when the sinner sees it, he must cry out, "Who am I, O Lord God, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" "By the grace of God I am what I am:" this, this is a "shedding abroad of his love in my heart:" * I read love in every line and letter of this new impression; and doth not this avail a person much?

* 2 Sam, vii. 18. 1 Cor. xv. 10. Rom. v. 5.

3. This new creation consecrates the soul to be a residence for God, and renders the person acceptable to him. God dwells in the humble and holy heart: there only he takes up his lodging, when he hath perfumed the heart with myrrh and frankincense: having built this mansion-house, it "becomes a habitation of God through the Spirit, a temple of the Holy Ghost." * God hath two thrones—one in heaven, and the other in a holy heart: the soul and body is a "sacrifice holy and acceptable to God," Rom. xii. 1. Happy soul, that is thus owned by the great God: no matter should men reject you, if God receive you; if men desert you, yet if God abide with you, you are happy: God casts out the devil's furniture, and saith, "This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it," Psalm cxxxii. 14, 15. No bad house will be kept there where God dwells, for he makes all welcome; this is important.

4. The first instant of this new creation, commences a communion with God; this is a consequence of the former, and the peculiar privilege of a saint: "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son." This communion with God, is a mystery to most men: every one that hangs about the court, doth not speak with the king: many meddle with duties, but meet not with God. "It is good for me to draw nigh to God." How oft doth the Christian cry out, "Oh when shall I come and appear before God?" † This new creature puts a bias in the soul God-wards, it naturally carries the believer upwards, to engage "his heart in approaching to God;" and the "Lord meets him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness." Birds cannot converse with men, there is not a suitableness

* Isa. lvii. 15. Cant. iii. 6. Ephes. ii. 22. 1 Cor. vi. 17, 19.
† 1 John i. 3. Psalm lxxiii. 28. xlii. 2.

of nature; a "hypocrite cannot, dare not come before God:" * but a saint can draw near with boldness through Christ; for he is like God, and communion is founded in similitude. †

5. This new creature evidenceth a soul's interest in Christ, and union to him; yea, puts the poor believer in a capacity of deriving influence from him, as the child in the womb draws nourishment from the mother. It is this new creature that evidenceth our interest in Christ; "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." This was one end of our Lord's giving himself for us, to "purchase to himself a peculiar people." Christ's cross was both an altar and a laver, to expiate and to purify, to sanctify and justify; you shall obtain continual supplies of grace from Christ, and of his fulness receive grace for grace. ‡ The new creature hath a constant spring to feed it, and to recruit it in its decays; God still saith, "My grace shall be sufficient for thee;" so he becomes indefectible, the new creature needs not to fear famishing, having such breasts of consolation to suck, and such a storehouse; so saith the apostle, "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you;" || surely then this new creature avails much.

6. The new creature is the inlet or avenue to true joy, peace, and satisfaction; though in its first infancy, there be a casting down, yet it is in order to a lifting up. Light is sown for the righteous; it may for a season lie in the furrows of gospel sorrow; "They

* Jer. xxx. 21. Isa. lxiv. 5. Job. xiii. 16.
† Communio fundatur in similitudine.
‡ 2 Cor. v. 17. Tit. ii. 14. John i. 16.
|| 2 Cor. xii. 9. Isaiah lxvi. 11. 1 Pet. v. 10.

that sow in tears, shall reap in joy," just like the pangs of a child-bearing woman, that end in comfort. "The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;* all joy comes in at this door; that is but a spurious, yea diabolical peace, which is not a companion of the new creature; "when a strong man armed keepeth the palace, his goods are in peace;" the palace is the heart, the goods are the soul's faculties; the strong man is the devil; the soul hath never a quiet hour in God's way, till Satan be dispossessed, and a rightful Lord introduced, that is, our Lord Jesus. It is true, there are oft furrows in the face of the new creature, but they are for sin, and for want of the sense of its in-being; but in God's time, "he will rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory;" sorrowful sufferings will at last "yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness."† And is this worth nothing?

7. This new creature hath all things profitable entailed upon it. "Godliness is profitable to all things;" yea, "godliness with contentment, is great gain." All the good things of heaven and earth, are made sure by covenant title to this new creature; "All things are yours," saith God; every thing turns to advantage; the Christian is the true chymist, to extract gold out of every thing; "All things work together for good to him;"‡ though not singly, yet jointly, combined with other ingredients; he gains for the improvement of this new man by outward losses. Every mercy, ordinance, providence, and affliction becomes a talent by which he is a gainer, Matt. xxv. 27. If he fight with Satan, he gets ground at last. In petty skirmishes and some battles the Carthaginians obtained victories, but the

* Psalm xcvii. 11. cxxvi. 5, 6. John xvi. 21. Rom. xiv. 17.
† Luke xi. 21, 22. 1 Pet. i. 8. Heb. xii. 11.
‡ 1 Tim. iv. 8. vi. 6. 1 Cor. iii. 21. Rom. viii. 28.

Romans came off conquerors in the end. So the pious Christian may receive some foils, but "at last he shall be more than a conqueror," yea, "a triumpher" through the Captain of his salvation, Rom. viii. 37.

8. The new creature renders the person that hath it, safe, in a safe condition. He "that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." The holy angels are a royal guard to these "new-born babes of salvation." Many are the dangers to which the new creature is exposed; but one angel is as a whole camp, to encompass and deliver God-fearing souls.* The God of angels is also nigh them, and saves them; he will secure them from seduction, and the evil of temptation. It is not possible that the elect should be finally and irrecoverably seduced; for grace establisheth the heart, and they "that are of us, shall no doubt continue with us:" they shall be kept "by mighty power, through faith to salvation."† And we know that these souls that are born of God, are so kept, "that the wicked one toucheth them not:" God will "keep them, that they shall not be tempted above what they are able." God will furnish his child with armour of proof against Satan's assaults; his breastplate may be shot at, but never shot through; the "Christian's bow abides in strength," and he stands as a rock in the midst of waves.‡ He can neither be stormed nor undermined, if the saints have but a little strength, yet it shall be lasting, yea, everlasting.

9. The new creature makes Christians that possess it useful and profitable to all about them. It is natural for this new creature to propagate religion: as

* Psalm xci. 1. Heb. i. 14. Psalm xxxiv. 7, 18.
† Matt. xxiv. 24. Heb. xiii. 9. 1 John ii. 19. 1 Pet. i. 5.
‡ 1 John v. 18. 1 Cor. x. 13. Rev. iii. 8—10.

sin, so grace is assimilating: how solicitous was the church for her "little sister that had no breasts, when she should be spoken for?" How did the blessed apostle Paul pant after the conversion of his countrymen, the Jews? The believer labours to do good to all about him, both good and bad. He would fain pluck sinners out of the fire of hell, and engage them for heaven;* and he spurs on his brethren in heaven's road, by counsels, admonitions, prayers, example, and all holy exercises in christian communion. Such become the pillars of the place and nation where they live: ten righteous persons might have saved Sodom; and Lot's presence there bound the angels' hands till he was gone. The Christian will never know while he lives what use he has been of in the world. Every pious soul is a fruitful tree, that "brings forth fruit in due season, yea, in old age."†

10. This new creature prepares souls for gospel-privileges; it is only the new creature that is a vessel proper to receive the new wine of the gospel, Matt. ix. 16, 17. In the gospel all things are new, Rev. xxi. 5. There is a new name, Rev. iii. 12; new church, Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 2; new way, Heb. x. 20; new covenant, Heb. viii. 8; a new commandment, John xiii. 34; new sacraments, Matt. xxvi. 26. xxviii. 19; a new relation, 1 Pet. ii. 9; a new condition, 2 Pet. iii. 13; and a new song, Rev. xiv. 3: yea, new heavens and a new earth. And surely it is very fit that Christians should have new hearts, which God promiseth in the new covenant, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." New qualifications prepare persons for new dispensations; therefore God joins the new heavens, and "new

* Cant. viii. 8. Rom. ix. 1—3. x. 1. Jude, 22.

† Gen. xviii. 32. Psalm i. 3. xcii. 14.

earth with the new seed," Isa. lxvi. 22, else there would be a great inconsistency.

11. The new creature prepares persons for death and heaven; "To these to live is Christ, and to die gain; living and dying, these are the Lord's;" it is this that renders persons "meet for the heavenly inheritance."* None can see God, but those that are pure in heart; these, and only these, are "wrought for this self-same thing." Heaven is not like Noah's ark, that had clean and unclean creatures brought into it; "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."† Frogs came into Pharoah's court; but no unclean thing can enter heaven. A sensual palate could not taste the sweetness of that wine which is in our Father's kingdom, for it is new wine, and renewed souls only are capable of taking pleasure in it. Happy is the man that hath got Christ in the arms of his faith, and in his heart by this new nature, he may lift up his head, and say with Simeon, "Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."‡ And is not this important to souls?

12. This new creature is heaven begun; it is a considerable part of heaven; holiness is happiness; it is the seed and embryo of the heavenly state. Grace and glory form a blessed connexion, Psal. lxxxiv. 11; they differ only in degree, not in kind; grace is glory begun, glory is grace consummated; grace is the bud, glory is the flower. This new creature is the key of paradise, the inlet into glory; yea, it is salvation already, 2 Tim. i. 9, "Who hath saved and called us." This blessed work of the new creature is a "quicken-

* Phil. i. 21. Rom. xiv. 8. Col. i. 12.
† Matt. v. 8. 2 Cor. v. 5. Heb. xii. 14.
‡ Rev. xxi. 9. Matt. xxvi. 29. Luke ii. 29 30.

ing of us together with Christ, and raiseth us up together, and makes us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus;" and thus we are saved in our representative, Eph. ii. 5—7. This divine principle is heaven begun, not only as a pledge, but part of it. The scriptures often tell us, that God's children have eternal life, John xvii. 2. And this is, *in pretio*, in price, for it is a purchased possession, Eph. i. 14.—*In promisso*, in promise, for God hath promised eternal life to all that obey him.—*In semine*, in the seed, the water within the believer, is a well springing up to eternal life, John iv. 14.—*In pignore*, in pledge, this is called sometimes the "seal of the Holy Spirit;" sometimes the earnest, which is part of the thing to be enjoyed; sometimes the witness of the Spirit, who never bears his testimony to a lie; "He that believeth in the Son of God, hath the witness in himself; for the Holy Spirit beareth witness with our spirits."* And in these respects the new creature is important in such a manner, as no external gospel privileges, or worldly enjoyments are to the children of men.

CHAP. V.

SOME INFERENCES DRAWN FROM THE PREMISES.

IV. For the practical improvement of this important truth, I shall keep close to the method which the Holy Ghost prescribes for the discussion of all truths; 2 Tim. iii. 16, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for *doctrine*, for *reproof*, for *cor-*

* Heb. v. 9. Eph. i. 13, 14. 1 John v. 10. Rom. viii. 16.

rection, for *instruction in righteousness*. These are the uses I shall make of this subject:

First, For doctrine, or information of the judgment, that our minds may be acquainted with points proper to be known.

Now there may be an inquiry into seven things relative to the new creature, which I shall reduce to question and answer.

1. *Qu.* Is the framing of this new creature in the soul miraculous? The reason of this question is, because we have compared it to, and even shewed its precedency above the first creation, which was a miracle, therefore it should seem that this also must be so.

Answ. (1.) Some things are miracles, yet not a creation; as Stephen seeing Jesus at God's right hand, Acts vii. 55; or barren Sarah's conceiving, Gen. xxi. 2; or the sun's going back, or standing still, Isa. xxxviii. 8: for then nature only proceeds beyond its ordinary course.

(2.) Some things are both a miracle and a creation, as the virgin Mary's conceiving, and bearing a Son, yet remaining a virgin, Luke i. 35. The production of manna was both a miracle and a creation, Exod. xvi. 15.

(3.) Some things only seem miraculous to ignorant people, as an eclipse of the sun, but mathematicians know the cause.

(4.) Some things are a creation, yet not a miracle, as the conversion of a soul, the subject is a rational soul, and so capable of a principle of grace, and had once God's image; but it was lost, and is recovered by a spiritual creation, of that which man had lost by his fall and folly.

2. *Qu.* Is there any inclination in man towards this new creation? Or, is there any spark of good

left in man upon his fall, that being improved by his natural faculties and diligence, may grow up to a new creature? For it may seem there is in man a natural conscience, prompting him to good, excusing him in doing it, drawing him from evil, and accusing him on committing it. See Rom. ii. 14, 15.

Answ. (1.) Those common notices or anticipations of good, are not in the will, but in the mind; not in the affections, but conscience.* It was not engraven on their will to choose it, but the power of some truths flashed in their eyes, that they could not but know them, and have some general liking for them; so that they could not but know that adultery and stealing are bad, and the contrary, good.

(2.) But whether these were left in man's heart after the fall, as relics of God's image, or introduced by God's providence afterwards for the good of mankind, and to maintain peace and intercourse in societies, is much disputed; Mr. Capel, on Temptation, thinks the latter. However,

(3.) All our Protestant writers affirm, with the scriptures, that man's nature is universally depraved, against the Socinians, who hold that the nature of man is not corrupted; but say, whatsoever spot or vice is in man, proceeds from frequent acts of sin, and custom in sinning, without the internal corruption of his nature. But the scriptures tell us of man's total degeneracy. "In me," saith Paul, that is, "in my flesh, dwells no good thing." Our "mind and conscience is defiled." "There is none righteous, no, not one," of all the race of mankind.† And therefore they need "a sanctification throughout, in soul, spirit, and body."‡

* κοιναὶ ἔννοιαι, or πρόληψεις. Nec vero cordis nomen pro sede affectuum, sed tantum pro intellectu capitur.—*Calv. in loc.*

† Tit. i. 15. Rom. iii. 9, 10. ‡ 1 Thess. v. 23.

(4.) There is an utter inability in man to renew himself; for we are "all without strength, cannot think a good thought;" yea, are dead in trespasses and sins;* and merely passive in the first infusion of spiritual life; a subject capable of divine operations; but "in the power of darkness, led captive by Satan at his pleasure." The "carnal mind is enmity to God; and "God works both to will, and to do, of his good pleasure."†

3. *Qu.* Why then do God and man call upon us to turn ourselves, yea, to make for ourselves "a new heart and a new spirit," Ezek. xviii. 31, if this be not in our power? Doth he not mock us, when he calls us to do that which he knows it is impossible for us to do?

Answ. No; for, (1.) It was once in our power to do good by his donation, and if we have lost it by our own folly, and cannot do what he requires, we must hereby know, that God hath not lost his authority to command, because we have lost our ability to obey: he will let us know his sovereignty. But

(2.) God knows man is a proud creature, and thinks he can do what he cannot. And now God commands, to convince him of his insufficiency, that he may look up to him for help. Yet,

(3.) Though man has lost the rectitude of his faculties, he hath not lost his faculties; he hath a rational soul, if he have not spiritual grace. Though carnal persons be morally dead, yet they are naturally alive. Men have a self-reflecting conscience, which they may, and must use; "It is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly," Prov. xx. 27.

* Rom. v. 6. 2 Cor. iii. 5. Eph. ii. 1.

† Subjectum Dei actionem suscipiens. Col. i. 13. 2 Tim. ii. 26. Rom. viii. 7.

(4.) It was the saying of Augustine, twelve hundred years ago, "He that made thee without thyself, will not save thee without thyself." If thou be not an efficient in thy own conversion, thou mayest and must be an instrument in thy salvation: thou art bound to work out thy own salvation, Phil. ii. 12.

4. *Qu.* What is a man better for his endeavours, unless God give him the grace of this new creature? All that he can do, will be to no purpose, nothing can be pleasing to God, or available to himself in his natural state. "For without faith it is impossible to please God," Heb. xi. 6.

Answ. (1.) Though carnal men cannot do what God requires in a due manner, yet God hath some respect to such as for the matter do something of their duty. God took notice of Ahab's humiliation, and "promised not to bring the evil in his days," 1 Kings xxi. 27, 29. Jehoahaz was none of the best kings, "Yet, when he besought the Lord, he hearkened to him," 2 Kings xiii. 4. And upon Rehoboam's humiliation, the Lord considerably remitted his punishment, 2 Chron. xii. 6, 7. And is not a relaxation or removal of outward punishment of some worth with you? Yea, though the young gentleman's obedience was but poor stuff, and he in his natural state, yet Jesus beholding him, loved him; see Mark x. 20, 21. Is this nothing?

(2.) However, such as frame not their hearts and doings to turn to God, and through sloth or wilfulness, neglect God's appointed means of becoming new creatures, do evidently declare themselves to be causes of their own damnation;—render themselves daily worse and worse, and grow more unable to repent, 2 Tim. iii. 13;—provoke God to give them up to their own hearts' lusts, Psal. lxxxi. 11, 12;—make themselves manifold more the children of wrath, Matt. xxiii. 15;

—and are more inexcusable, and sink themselves deeper in hell. And is this any way desirable?

(3.) But though such poor souls cannot with all their endeavours make themselves new creatures, yet we may say of such, as our Lord said of the scribe, Mark xii. 33, 34, when "he saw that he answered discreetly, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." You are in a hopeful way to heaven, while you are endeavouring in the use of God's appointed means.

(4.) And who can tell what these labours will produce? It is true, thou canst not deserve grace to challenge it as debt for the work done; nor can I say that grace is due to thee by any promise; for all the "promises of God are made in Christ," 2 Cor. i. 20. But I have something yet to say for thy encouragement: for, in the first place, thou hast to deal with a God of infinite goodness, who hath "sworn he delights not in the death of a sinner," Exod. xxxiv. 6. Ezek. xxxiii. 11. And who knows what he may do for thee?—then God hath yet spared thy life, and is sending terms of reconciliation to thee a vile sinner, 2 Cor. v. 20; he stands knocking at thy door, while thou knockest at his. A general pardon is proclaimed, Mark xvi. 15; thou hast no cause to despair.—Didst thou ever meet with any that came sad, and disappointed from his door? Did he ever say to any, "Seek ye me in vain?" nay, doth he not say, "Those that come unto me, I will in no wise cast off?"—And doth he not say, "Those that seek me early, shall find me? Doth not the gospel promise what the law commands? God doth graciously undertake to do what he requires us to do; he bids you "make you a new heart;" and the same God saith, "I will put a new spirit within them."* O put him to it, and try

* Isa. xlv. 19. John vi. 37. Prov. viii. 17. Ezek. xi. 19.

him what he will do. The means I shall suggest hereafter.

5. *Qu.* Is not the new creature produced in the ordinance of baptism, which is called the washing or laver of regeneration? Tit. iii. 5; then we need no more.

Answ. (1.) Baptism, as circumcision of old, is "a seal of the righteousness of faith:" and supports faith either in the parent, or in the child, or party baptized, for the "promise is to you and to your children." The apostles baptized believers. Now the effect is not before the cause: if they were regenerated before, baptism could not be the cause of regeneration.

(2.) Yet some have been baptized upon the profession of their faith, that never were regenerated, as "Simon Magus, who was still in the gall of bitterness."* So it was but a sign, no proper cause, which would have had its certain effect.

(3.) If baptism were the cause of regeneration, then no unbaptized children could be regenerate, and so could not be saved, if dying in infancy; but David, by virtue of the covenant, believed his child's salvation, 2 Sam. xii. 23, though not circumcised.

(4.) It is a groundless popish doctrine, to think that sacraments confer grace,† merely because used, or that they stamp an indelible character on the party baptized; it is but an external act, and cannot reach the heart or conscience, any more than old testament rites could do, Heb. x. 1—4. Nor is it in the power of the holiest minister on earth, or angel in heaven, it is God's prerogative, and he is a free agent, 1 Pet. i. 23, to work or suspend his grace according to his pleasure.

But you may say, doth not baptism now save?

My reply is, yes; when there is the answer of a good

* Rom. iv. 11. Acts ii. 39. Acts viii. 13, 23.

† Ex opere operato.

conscience, and then it is by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. iii. 21. Rom. x. 9. The gospel preaching is "the power of God to salvation;" yet all are not saved by it; "faith comes by hearing," Rom. x. 17. Yet all that hear, do not believe; "for who hath believed our report?" Ordinances are but channels, not springs of grace; the blessing upon them depends entirely on sovereign grace. How many thousands have gone to hell with baptismal water on their faces! Ishmael, Esau, and all the house of Israel, in Jeremiah's days, were uncircumcised in heart, chap. ix. 26. Rest not satisfied with this, but see you "be baptized with the Holy Ghost, and with fire," Matt. iii. 11.

6. *Qu.* Wherein doth this new creature excel shining morality, or the splendid, common graces of hypocrites?

Answ. (1.) In the root or principle, produced by a saving change from nature to grace: carnal men, though they have never so fair a flower, yet want the "root of the matter," Job xix. 28. This unsoundness of heart is the hair in the moralist's pen that blurs all his fair writing; as it was said of a person, of such and such virtues, yet he is a leper, (as was said of Naaman the Syrian,) still graceless, unprincipled.

(2.) In its universality: "Zacharias and Elizabeth walked in all the commandments of the Lord," Luke i. 6. But of the moralist and the hypocrite it may be said, "The legs of the lame are not equal:" they are addicted to halting and halving: they are always partial, seem excellent in one grace, but defective in another; yea, totally want what is essentially necessary to constitute a saint. The moralist is defective in compliance with the first table of the law, the hypocrite with the second; but the new creature lies square to all commands and duties, at all times, Psalm cvi. 3.

(3.) The new creature acts for a right end,—God's glory and communion with him; but the moralist or

hypocrite always, and in every action, secretly casts his eye upon himself, his own profit, pleasure, or honour, as Jehu and the Pharisees.

(4.) The new creature always regards Jesus Christ, both for assistance and acceptance; the moralist and hypocrite stand upon their own legs, and think their penny, current money with God; but the gracious soul denies himself in all; his "works are wrought in God:" "He is accepted in the Beloved:" "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." *

7. *Qu.* Wherein lies the difference betwixt this new creature, which consists in sanctification, and the state of justification? The reason of this query is, because Papists and some others confound them.

Answ. (1.) The new creature in sanctification, is an inherent production within us. "A new spirit will I put within you:" and "the kingdom of God is within you." And though at first it be immediately caused by the Spirit, yet the Christian is an agent in promoting his sanctification; he may and must cleanse himself. † But now justification is in consequence of a work done without us, by the Lord Christ, by his satisfaction of divine justice on the cross, and by his intercession at God's right hand, we have "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." The red lines of Christ's blood, blot out the black lines of our sins from God's debt-book: he "washeth us from our sins in his own blood:" "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." ‡ No other person or thing is interposed; not faith itself, as a work, hath any causality in

* John iii. 21. Eph. i. 6. Isa. xlv. 25.

† Ezek. xxxvi. 26. Luke xvii. 21. 2 Cor vii. 1 1 John iii. 3.

‡ Ephes. i. 7. 1 John i. 7. Rev. i. 5. Rom. iv. 25.

this work; it is only God's free act of grace for Christ's sake, to forgive sins.

(2.) The new creature in sanctification, is not produced in the same measure or degree in all the saints of God; some that are sincere, come far short of others; there are "some babes, others strong men." It is said of some kings of Israel, "there was none like them:" "Hananiah feared God above many:" there was none like Job in the earth. So there were different products of the seed, yet all in good ground.* Some Christians abound in faith, love, humility, patience, knowledge, mortification,—others are defective. But justification is alike to all, "and upon all that believe, for there is no difference." The meanest, weakest believer hath as large a portion as the strongest. The apostle John saith, "I write unto you little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake." They are as much justified as fathers and young men: Mary Magdalene and the penitent thief were as much justified as Peter: the reason is, because they are all "partakers of like precious faith."† The least measure whereof attains its end of receiving Christ, as well as the greater; for it is Christ received by faith, that justifies: a weak hand may receive a gift as well as a stronger, though not so steadily; but it is the gift that enricheth, not the strength of the hand.

(3.) The new creature comes on by degrees, it is not complete at the first instant; it is first an embryo, Christ formed in the heart, and then "increaseth with the increase of God, till it come to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." The apostle thanks God for the Thessalonians, that

* Heb. v. 13, 14. Neh. vii. 2. Job i. 8. Matt. xiii. 23.
† Rom. iii. 22. 1 John ii. 12. 2 Pet. i. 1.

their "faith did grow exceedingly, and charity."* It is like the sun that "shineth more and more to the perfect day;" a good man grows stronger and stronger. But now justification is complete at first, every whit as much at first, when ingrafted into Christ, as afterwards; all that "believe, are justified from all things; no charge can be brought against them."† God "forgiveth all trespasses, blotting out the handwriting;" he thoroughly "washeth away his children's blood;" there is not a spot to be seen on them, no indictment can be drawn up against them."‡ But you may ask,

Why then are Christ's disciples bound to pray daily for pardon? Matt. vi. 12.

I answer, Because we are daily committing new sins, in "many things we offend all;" we miss it in every thing; oh, how "many are our secret faults;"‖—and because God would have us daily lie under the sense of our former guilt, the desert of sin, and the worth of pardoning grace. David was assured of pardon by Nathan; yet afterwards prays for it. The prodigal son confessed his fault, after his father had fallen on his neck.§ Pardoning grace may be clouded in the sense and assurance of it, and in this respect the righteousness "of God is revealed from faith to faith," Rom. i. 17; from a less to a stronger faith.—And besides, we may distinguish betwixt a justified state, and applications of pardon to the soul, "there is forgiveness with God," which must be daily sued out by faith and prayer, Psal. cxxx. 4.

* Col. ii. 19. Eph. iv. 13. 2 Thess. i. 3.
† Prov. iv. 18. Job xvii. 9. Acts xiii. 39. Rom. viii. 1.
‡ Col. ii. 13. Ezek. xvi. 9. Rom. viii. 33.
‖ James iii. 2. Psal. xix. 12.
§ 2 Sam. xii. 13. Psal. li. 2. Luke xv. 20, 21.

(4.) Another difference between this new creature and justification, is that the grace of the new creation is never perfect in this life; the holiest saints have some spots and defects: who can say, "I have made my heart clean; I am pure from my sin?" "There is not a just man on earth, that doth good, and sinneth not." John Baptist needs a new baptism; all the disciples need their first washing; a Paul complains of a body of death;* it is in heaven only that the "spirits of just men are made perfect." But justification is perfect; there is no spot in the justified; "Fair as the moon," as to sanctification; "clear as the sun," in respect of justification; white as snow. God deals with them, as if they had never offended, "casting their sins behind his back, into the depths of the sea, he remembers them no more."† But it may be objected,

Doth not God punish his people for sin?

I reply, What in this objection are called punishments, are not properly acts of vindictive justice, but fatherly chastisements, coming from God, not as a judge to punish a malefactor, but as an indulgent father to correct his wandering and wayward child. It is true, afflictions are materially a curse, but they are formally a blessing. With reference to this pardoning grace, it is worth noting what Dr. Ames observes,‡ that there is fourfold pardon:—In God's decree and purpose, Gal. iii. 8.—In Christ's undertaking, our sins being laid on him, Isa. liii. 6.—Virtually on the Christian's first relation to God, Rom. viii. 1.—Expressly applied on the believer's repentance, exercising faith, and having a sense of pardon, Rom. v. 1; and I may add there is a day for publicly proclaiming this pardon before the

* Prov. xx. 9. Eccl. vii. 20. Matt. iii. 14. John xiii. 8. Rom. vii. 24.
† Heb. xii. 23. Cant. vi. 10. Psal. li. 7. Isa. xxxviii. 17. Mic. vii. 19. Jer. xxxi. 34. ‡ Amesii Medul. page 139.

whole world, Acts iii. 19, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

CHAP. VI.

A REVIEW OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF MANY IN CONNECTION WITH THE THINGS WHICH HAVE BEEN STATED SHOWN TO MAKE REPROOF SEASONABLE.

If a new creation be available, and important, and even of such absolute necessity to the souls of men, then what shall we say of *non-pretenders* to it, and of *mere pretenders* to it?

1. There are some in the world, that plainly say in words or deeds, that they are as they have been, and so will continue; they trouble not themselves about these new things, but say, I am *semper idem*, still the same: I thank God, I am no turn-coat, nor will I meddle with them that are given to change, I love the old way.

To this I answer, Take that text with you, Jer. vi. 16, "Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein." Mark it, not simply the old way, except it be good; for there are many old ways that are not good: Cain's way is old enough, so is Balaam's and Korah's, yet there is a woe unto them that walk in those ways, Jude, 11. The woman of Samaria boasted, that their father Jacob gave them the well, and that her ancestors

did worship in that mountain, John iv. 12, 20, 24: but our Lord teacheth her other doctrines. It was no good plea of the Jews, that they did as their fathers had done, "in burning incense to the queen of heaven," though they pleaded great success; then, say they, "We had of plenty of victuals, and saw no evil," Jer. xliv. 17, 18, which may be compared with God's answer to them, ver. 21, 22. But let me say to you,

(1.) That this plea is an aggravation of the fault. If it be not a good way, every step you take in it, is a new error, and brings new guilt: "the way of the wicked seduceth him."* Have you examined, whether this be God's way or not? If you be wrong, the further you go, the further you are from God.

(2.) This continuance in old customs without inquiry will harden your hearts, and make you more incapable, yea, more unwilling to return. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots, then may ye also learn to do good, that are accustomed to do evil," Jer. xiii. 23. Custom in sin takes away conscience of sin; the more men travel, the more brawny are their feet.

(3.) But what think you, Adam went wrong, and do you delight to follow him? or rather should not the old man be crucified? Rom. vi. 6. You have no reason for being proud of the old man, "which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts, but rather put on this new man, which after God is created in righteousness, and true holiness," Eph. iv. 22, 24. See a parallel betwixt the first Adam and second, 1 Cor. xv. 45—49; and then make your choice.

(4.) You will never walk in heaven's road, without a change; deceive not yourselves, you must be turned

* Vetustas erroris seductio errantis.

from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers, 1 Pet. i. 18. You will never walk in this new and living way, without a new heart; you cannot serve God, but "it must be in newness of spirit, not in the oldness of the letter," Rom. vii. 6. You are undone, if you die as you are born; you need not change your religion, for you profess the true religion, only you must see that you be true to that religion by a change of heart and life; "Except you be born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God," John iii. 3; better never have been born, than not be newborn: but more of this anon. Tremble to think of appearing before God naked, or in your old rotten garments. The Gibeonites might cheat Israel with their old bottles, clouts, and shoes, Josh. ix. 4; but you cannot cozen God so; an old frame is not fit for a new state; or old hearts for new heavens; "if you live after the flesh, you shall die," that is, perish for ever, Rom. viii. 13; but if you through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live," that is, be saved.

There are many more that are far from being new creatures, that have a black brand of impiety printed on their foreheads, and disclaim any pretence to this new creation.

[i.] Such as have imbibed atheistical principles, and say with their tongues or in their hearts, "there is no God," Psal. xiv. 1; at least deists, that deny God's providence, and divine revelation.

[ii.] Profane scoffers at true christian piety and the power of godliness, 2 Pet. iii. 3; ridiculing puritans, and loading strictness in religion, with names of obloquy, scorn, and derision.

[iii.] Those who are profoundly ignorant of gospel mysteries, 1 Cor. xv. 34, and the essentials of religion,

the knowledge whereof is of the highest importance and necessity, and yet do scorn to learn.

[iv.] Voluptuous epicures, drunkards, adulterers, and such as wallow in all sensuality and immorality, without control or remorse, and glory in their shame, Phil. iii. 19.

[v.] Proud, contentious, revengeful, hateful, hating all about them, Tit. iii. 3; that evidently manifest the fruits, or works of the flesh, Gal. v. 19, 20, in bitter revilings, suits at law, and variance about trifles.

[vi.] Covetous, griping earth-worms, that make gain their godliness, gold their god, Col. iii. 5; these are idolaters, that are hard-hearted to the poor, but please themselves with worldly enjoyments, Luke xii. 19.

[vii.] Swearers, profane takers of the name of God in vain, foolish talkers, jesters, liars, Eph. v. 4, 5, who think that their tongues are their own, and that they may say what they list.

[viii.] Neglecters of God's worship, public, private, and secret, who never call on God except with horrid imprecations, yea, who even think it is in vain to serve God, Mal. iii. 14, and hate such as do.

Such flagitious offenders there are in the world, yea, in England, that make a scoff at the name of the Spirit and grace of Christ, and will own no regeneration, but what they imagine they receive in baptism, which yet they grossly contradict, as if they would scorn, and run counter to bible-religion and morality itself; these profligates I remit to the righteous judgment of the great God, because I have little hopes they will read such a plain Treatise as this, or hear any powerful preacher; and so are out of the road of ordinary means of grace, or hopes of good.

2. But those I have at present to deal with, are pre-

tenders, and but mere pretenders to this new creation, who have something like it, which will not prove the new creature, but a dead carcase, a lifeless image of it; many of our constant, diligent attenders on all ordinances, are apt to say, "I thank God, I hope I am a new creature." To which I answer, it is well if it prove so; but the apostle saith, "Not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth," 2 Cor. x. 18. And Solomon saith, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death," Prov. xiv. 12. But persons had need to beware taking counters for gold, pebbles for pearls: there is much counterfeit ware passeth for current coin now a-days. May not an angel be put up for a sign when the devil is within? Are not many professors like the Pharisees, painted sepulchres, "that appear fair, but within are full of rottenness, and dead men's bones," Matt. xxiii. 27, 28. Like a golden saddle stuffed with straw; or apothecaries' boxes, with specious titles, but empty of useful drugs; so it is said, a specious title, but nothing within of what is promised.* Alas, how many professors have we known acting the part of kings on the stage, who were beggars in rags, when divested of their gilded robes of a splendid profession? How many have the complexion, but not the constitution of saints? one calls them deaf nuts, another, apples of Sodom, a third, cockles and darnel, that make a fairer show than good wheat, but must be cast out. There were some of old, that desired to "make a fair show in the flesh," Gal. vi. 12; but are like vapouring tradesmen, that make a great show to gain credit, but if searched into, possibly not worth a groat, when their debts are paid; such there always have been, and it is well if the world be mended.

* Aliud in titulo, aliud in pyxide.

I shall briefly propound and answer the pleas, that many make for their pretence.

1 *Plea.* I have heard that the new creature consists in knowledge, and I thank God that he hath given me a large share of that.

Answ. We know that we all have knowledge; what kind of knowledge is yours? devils have more knowledge than you, yet are not, nor ever will be new creatures; a toad it is said, hath a pearl in its head, but poison in its body; thousands go knowingly to hell, and the more knowledge without grace, the more torment.*

2 *Plea.* But I believe the revelation of God, and give credit to the gospel, I am no heretic, I can say the creed, and am orthodox.

Answ. That is well so far; but read Rom. ii. 17—25. What canst thou say of thyself more than this professing Jew, that "rested in the law, made his boast of God, and approved of things more excellent," who yet was condemned as a perfidious, self-contradicting, God-dishonouring wretch; but thou believest, so doth "the devil believe, and tremble," James ii. 19. Thou mayest have an orthodox head, and heterodox feet.

3 *Plea.* I am come of religious parents, who improved and pleaded the covenant for me, and trained me up in the fear of God.

Answ. John the Baptist anticipates this plea, Matt. iii. 9, "Think not to say in your hearts, We have Abraham to our father," Matt. viii. 12, "The children of the kingdom may be sent to outer darkness." Alas, parental privileges, without parent's principles, signify nothing. Let our Lord Christ, who will be judge, answer this vain plea, John viii. 33—44. This may

* 1 Cor. viii. 1. Tit. i. 16. Luke xii. 47.

aggravate your sin, but never save your souls without personal piety.

4 *Plea.* I have made a credible profession of my faith, am baptized, and have been admitted to the Lord's supper, to unite with God's people.

Answ. So did Simon Magus believe, he professed his faith, and was baptized, Acts viii. 13, 20—23. He deceived the purest church on earth, for he proved a base hypocrite; so did Judas, so did he that wanted the wedding garment, Matt. xxii. 12. And how easy it is to spread a mist before the eyes of fallible men, daily experience testifies. See an instance of some that partook of extraordinary privileges and ordinances, but yet rejected, 1 Cor. x. 5.

5 *Plea.* I am not only admitted, but continue along with them, and keep up intercourse with them in public and private exercises of religion.

Answ. So did the foolish virgins accompany the wise, till the last hour, with shining lamps, and when the bridegroom came, they all trimmed their lamps, but at last it was found that they had no oil in their vessels, and so were shut out, see Matt. xxv. 1—12. And do you not read of some that pertinaciously maintain their plea to the very last, even when the door is shut? they begin to say, "We have eaten and drunk in thy presence," Luke xiii. 25—27.

6 *Plea.* But I have had great convictions of conscience for the evil of sin, and strong apprehensions of the justice of God; these surely were signs of a change.

Answ. Cain had these legal terrors, yet was an obstinate transgressor; so had Saul, so Judas; yea, Felix trembled upon Paul's preaching, Acts xxiv. 25. And all these were but as *præjudicium judicii*, prelibations of horrible vengeance in the other world. Some sinners have a "fearful looking for of judgment,

and fiery indignation," Heb. x. 27. Oh! look to your coming out of your horrors of conscience; see you close with Christ.

7 *Plea.* Yes, I have had strong persuasions in my breast to close with Christ, and do take him by faith to be my Saviour.

Answ. An almost persuasion is one thing, and a thorough resolution is another, Acts xxvi. 27, 28. Some barter for, but buy not this pearl of price; some are content with a Christ to pardon and save them, but like him not as a king to rule them, and subdue their lusts. Look to it, there are more sorts of faith than saving; the apostle supposeth a man to have all faith, 1 Cor. xiii. 2; yet not that which worketh by love; feigned faith is one thing, unfeigned is another, 1 Tim. i. 5.

8 *Plea.* But I confess all my sins, from the bottom of my heart, repent of them, and am heartily sorry I have done amiss.

Answ. So have many hypocrites and reprobates; so did Pharaoh, "I have sinned this time, the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked."* Twice did Saul confess his folly; yea, lift up his voice and wept, and ingenuously said, "I have sinned." So did Ahab humble himself. And you find Judas repenting himself; yea, restoring, and saying, "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood." Oh see that yours be not a worldly sorrow!†

9 *Plea.* But I make strong resolutions of better and new obedience, and do actually reform: is not this evidence of a new creature?

Answ. No, the new creature always produceth reformation, but reformation may be without the new creature. "Herod feared John the Baptist, and when

* Exod. ix. 27. 1 Sam. xxiv. 16, 17. xxvi. 21.

† 1 Kings xxi. 27. Matt. xxvii. 3, 4. 2 Cor. vii. 10.

he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly." Partial reformation is no sound evidence of regeneration: the unclean spirit of scandalous sinning may go out of the devil's slave for a season. Men may escape gross pollutions, yet be entangled in the devil's fetters. *

10 *Plea.* I do not only reform, but also conform to the will of God in keeping all his commands; this surely discovers grace.

Answ. Yes, if done from a right principle, according to rule, for a right end, with faith in Jesus Christ: but deceive not yourselves, outward compliance doth not always prove the existence of a new creature; the young gentleman, Matt. xix. 20, said concerning the commandments, "All these things have I kept from my youth up, what lack I yet?" Alas, poor man, he lacked the main thing: Paul, before conversion, saith of himself, "touching the righteousness of the law, blameless, Phil. iii. 6.

11 *Plea.* Besides, I do not only reform and conform, but perform many important duties; I read, pray, fast, and am serious in God's worship.

Answ. It is well so far; all do not so: but remember those hypocrites, "That sought God daily, and delighted to know his ways"—"yea, the Pharisees made long prayers;" they even "fasted, and that twice a week." † They were famous for religious exercises, yet gross hypocrites.

12 *Plea.* Those were only for things external in religion, but I am for internal also, that God may have my heart.

Answ. Very well; but it is one thing to be sound in doctrines, another to be sincere in what is practical

* Mark vi. 20. Matt. xii. 43—45. 2 Pet. ii. 20—23.

† Isa. lviii. 2. Matt. xxiii. 14. Luke xviii. 11, 12.

and experimental: it is one thing to say it, another thing to feel it, and do it. The scribe, Mark xii. 32, 33, subscribed to the truth of the great doctrine of "loving the Lord with all the heart, understanding, soul, and strength, and repeats it," yet was not of, but only, "not far from the kingdom of God," ver. 34. Yea, you may take delight in approaching to God, yet be deficient, Isa. lviii. 2.

13 *Plea.* But I am upright in what I do; I know nothing of myself but integrity: conscience doth not accuse me of being a hypocrite.

Answ. It may be so, conscience may be asleep, and saith nothing, or nothing to the purpose, being blinded with ignorance, or besotted with self-conceit and want of self-examination. But know, there may be a moral integrity in particular acts, when there is not a gospel-integrity in point of state, as in heathen Abimelech. See God's attestation to it, Gen. xx. 5, 6.

14 *Plea.* I have a love to God, and Jesus Christ, and follow him out of a dear and tender regard for him.

Answ. It is well if so; but is it not self-love that engageth you to follow him? as those, John vi. 26, "Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." Augustine complained 1200 years ago, Jesus is scarcely loved for Jesus' sake.* He pays well for his entertainment in the world's coin. Let Christ and carnal interest part, and then you will see which is the master you will follow; then a discovery will be made.

15 *Plea.* Well, but I have suffered much for Christ, his cause, and a good conscience, a trial hath been made of my integrity.

Answ. You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin, Heb. xii. 4. Yea, the apostle seems

* Vix diligitur Jesus propter Jesum.

to suppose a man may give his body to be burnt, and yet not have charity, 1 Cor. xiii. 3. And it may be as possible, some may suffer in a vicious humour for a good cause, as others pertinaciously in a bad cause; the thorny-ground hearers passed the brunt of persecution, but were not right, Matt. xiii. 20, 22. And the apostle Paul supposes the Galatians to "have suffered many things in vain," Gal. iii. 4. Many things make up a Christian sufferer. Men may bear the cross, and not follow Christ.

16 *Plea.* But I give liberally to the poor of my substance, and am much in the exercise of charity to persons in necessity.

Answ. The apostle supposeth still, that a man may bestow all his goods to feed the poor, and yet not have charity, 1 Cor. xiii. 3. You will say, this is a strange paradox; what is charity, but a free distribution? but the apostle distinguisheth betwixt a hand-charity, and a heart-charity; the poor widow with half a farthing, and a free heart, gave more than all the other rich men's large distributions; some give for ostentation, others of necessity, yea, out of covetousness; you give nothing, unless you give yourselves first to God. *

17 *Plea.* I am forward for reformation in my place, appearing against profaneness, and sabbath breaking, and am of a public spirit.

Answ. It is well done, but see you mistake not. How oft did the Jews find fault with our Lord for healing on the sabbath day, and his disciples, for plucking ears of corn? Take care that blind zeal transport you not; but suppose it be against sin, see whether self bear not sway, as it did in Jehu, who was partial in his reformation; or at least that it be not temporary

* Matt. vi. 1, 2. Mark xii. 41—44. 2 Cor. ix. 5, 7. 2 Cor. viii. 5.

zeal, like that of Joash, who was very zealous for reform whilst his good uncle Jehoiada lived.*

18 *Plea.* I thank God, I have good gifts in conversation and in prayer, and can edify others, who are disposed to commend me.

Answ. Gifts are one thing, grace another; all gifted men are not gracious men; who more eminent than Judas the traitor, yet an apostle? and some will say at the last day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?" Matt. vii. 22, 23; to whom he will say, "I never knew you, depart from me." The devil hath finer gifts than any of you all; yet he is a damned fiend in hell. Gifts come upon another errand than grace, 1 Cor. xii. 7. Gifts are given to profit others, grace for a man's own soul.

19 *Plea.* I am verily persuaded I am sound at heart, my conscience flies not in my face, yea, I have great peace, joy, and comfort within.

Answ. God knows whether your peace be of the right stamp or not; I have told you there is a peace of the devil's making, and that may arise from conscience's sleep security. I now tell you of a joy arising from the common workings of the Spirit, the "stony ground hearers anon with joy received the word," Matt. xiii. 20; "but had no root," Luke viii. 13. It is not to tell what joy and triumph some may have upon a mistake; some "taste of the good word, yea, of the heavenly gift;" yet fall away totally and finally. Look to yourselves, thousands deceive themselves in this weighty affair.†

20 *Plea.* You are seeking to drive us to despair, but that you shall never do, I will hope well still, say what you choose.

* Matt. xii. 1, 2. 2 Kings x. 28, 29. 2 Chron. xxiv. 2—18.

† Gal. vi. 3. James i. 22. Heb. vi. 4—6.

Answ. There is a double despair, (1.) Good and necessary; a despair of ever being saved in the state of nature wherein we are born, and this God brings the sinner to, in order to the implantation of sound hope, and sincere faith in the soul. (2.) There is an evil, sinful despair of obtaining mercy at God's hands through Christ: God forbid we should drive sinners to this despair: no, no, it is the former at which we aim. Such as Paul felt, Rom. vii. 9, "I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died;" that is, I saw myself in a lost state, having no hopes of salvation, while I continued in a state of nature: we are sure that till souls see themselves condemned, they will never look after a pardon; it is this to which we would drive men.——There is also a twofold hope: (1.) A bad, a false, vain hope, which is built upon men's fancy and imagination. This will be "swept away like a spider's web, will be as the giving up of the ghost; what hath the hypocrite gained by his hope, when God taketh away his soul?"* It is the best office we can do the sinner, to break the heart of this groundless hope, that we may bring in a better hope: hence, (2.) There is a good "hope through grace;" a hope "that will not make ashamed;" a hope that rests upon the promises of grace in the gospel; it is this that will do men good at the last: but men must be sure to observe and comply with the terms of the promise, else it is groundless presumption. A prince hath as much reason to be offended with him that keeps not close to his commission, as with another that acts without a commission. The Israelites of old, saith one, durst make God and his promise a leaning-stock for their foul elbows to rest on. "They call themselves the holy city, and stay themselves upon the

* Job viii. 14. xi. 20. xxvii. 8.

God of Israel." * See Micah iii. 11. Nothing more common, yet nothing more dangerous, for such are more bold than welcome: for though a prince may be so condescending as to let a poor, sick, or wounded man, especially in his service, fainting and unable to go alone, upon his humble request, make use of his arm rather than perish in the street, yet he would reject a reeling drunkard, if he desired to lean on him. Thus a poor, bleeding, humble penitent is entertained, when a presumptuous rebel is discarded with infinite abhorrence: we must encourage the former, and convince the latter, that their hope may be extinguished, and another hope, (" a lively hope," that teacheth persons to cleanse themselves) be planted in the soul: for " the wicked is driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death." †

CHAP. VII.

CORRECTION OF MISTAKES ON THIS SUBJECT ATTEMPTED, AND THEIR DANGER DESCRIBED.

My third use is πρὸς ἐπανόρθωσιν, for correction, or castigation of what is amiss, in order to a restitution of the souls of sinners to their pristine rectitude, for that is the notion of the Greek term; since it signifies not only correction of manners, but rectifying of inward faculties, as critics observe. I must confess, the work is arduous, and it is impossible for a finite creature to effect this new creation: the best ministers are

* 2 Thess. ii. 17. Rom. v. 5. Isa. xlviii. 2.
† 1 Pet. i. 3. 1 John iii. 3. Prov. xiv. 32.

but instruments; and what can the axe do without the hand to move it, or the sword without the hand to wield it? "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?" 1 Cor. iii. 5. "I am," said worthy Mr. Baxter, "but a pen for God to write with." Well, then, shall we do nothing, because we cannot do all? He that set us a work, is able to second our work with his benediction: the world hath been formed anew by this blessed word of truth.

I shall therefore make one experiment more, to see what the great God will do for a new creation upon the souls of men; humbly imploring the blessing of heaven upon my poor endeavours. In prosecuting my intention, I shall employ some persuasive arguments to prevail with poor sinners, to look after it in due time; and then answer what objections they can make against it, and so come to the last thing mentioned by the apostle,—instruction in righteousness.

For motives and arguments, I shall not repeat any thing drawn from the advantages thereof detailed in the doctrinal part, as—rectifying the soul's faculties—evidencing divine love—consecrating the soul to God—fitting it for communion with him—entitling to Christ—producing true joy—entailing all things profitable—putting persons into a safe state—rendering them useful—fitting them for gospel privileges—preparing them for death and heaven—being even heaven begun. All these might be improved as strong arguments to persuade sinners to press after a change.

But I shall at present bring some arguments from the danger sinners are in, till they become new creatures.

1. If you are not new creatures, you are not true Christians; "For if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," 2 Cor. v. 17, that is, whoever is worthy

the name of Christian, or fit to bear so high a character, he must necessarily be a new creature, or else he arrogates to himself a high title, not belonging to him. And alas, what will a bare name signify? arrogating such a high title, is a piece of high presumption; nay, it is no less than blasphemy, "when men call themselves Jews, or Christians and are not," Rev. ii. 9; even as it is treason against the rightful sovereign, for any subject to entitle himself king. What horrid presumption are graceless sinners guilty of? for whatever you may account yourselves, God accounts you no better than heathens; uncircumcised Judah is ranked with Egypt, Edom, Ammon, and Moab in scripture, Jer. ix. 26; "Are ye not as children of Ethiopians to me, O children of Israel, saith the Lord," Amos ix. 7; profane Saul is called a Cushite, Psal. vii; and graceless Jews, though of the true religion, are accounted as strangers. God esteems wicked princes, rulers of Sodom, and speaks of his people by profession, as people of Gomorrah, Isa. i. 10. And what if God account you that boast of the christian name, as no better than Jews, Mahometans, or heathens? you are like to fare no better than they.

2. You will fare worse than they. God will judge you according to the helps and advantages you have had; it will be worse with you than Sodom and Gomorrah, Tyre and Sidon, Matt. xi. 20—24; yea, the men of Nineveh, "and queen of the south, shall rise up in judgment" against graceless professors of true religion, Matt. xii. 41, 42. O how dreadful a rebuke will this occasion! They may say, if we had heard so much of Christ, and gospel grace, we would have been more compliant, we knew not what state we were in, or what would be the awful consequence thereof, as you heard from day to day; we never pretended such high

things, nor were engaged by baptism to be God's servants, subjects, or soldiers, as you were. Now we know that the soldier that hath taken bounty money, and is false, or fights none, or is a renegado, hath the heaviest doom, Matt. xxiv. 51; the hypocrites are free denizens of hell, it is their proper place. You had better been born in India, than in England, or in Turkey, than within the pale of the church, and not be new creatures; yea, better have been no creatures, or the vilest creatures, than not be new creatures, as our Lord said of Judas, "It had been better if he had never been born," Mark xiv. 21, so say I, if not new born; if you lived and died as brutes, there is an end of you, you would feel neither weal nor woe; but it will be otherwise with you; alas, alas for you that ever you had existence! Lord, have mercy on you.

3. If you be not new creatures, you are slaves to the devil, and bear his image; "you are led captive by him at his pleasure," you are his willing slaves. It is converting grace only that brings out of the power of Satan; his fetters are invisible, for he holds his black hand over the sinner's eye, and "worketh so effectually in his heart,"* that the poor slave will not believe his slavery, but thinks he is a freeman, "though he be holden with the cords of his sins," Prov. v. 22, and dragged apace hell-wards. O worse than Egyptian bondage, or Turkish slavery! who would abide it? Yea, without this new creation, you have the devil's image upon you, you are the very picture of that infernal fiend; so that if it be asked, whose image and superscription is this? it must be answered, Satan's. Our Lord tells the Jews, "You are of your father the devil," John viii. 44. Your envy is the devil's eye, your hypocrisy the devil's cloven foot, your lying the

* 2 Tim. ii. 26. Acts xxvi. 18. 2 Cor. iv. 4. Eph. ii. 2.

devil's tongue, your carnal policy the devil's head, your pride and self-conceit the devil's lofty countenance, and all these will end in the devil's despair. Oh tremble, to bear such a resemblance to God's enemy. It is related, that when they brought Tamerlane a pot of gold, he asked what stamp was upon it; when he understood it had the Roman stamp, he utterly refused it: even so will God reject you, if the devil's stamp be on you, you will be no current money with God, though you have golden gifts.

4. If you be not new creatures, God and you are at variance, there is an enmity and antipathy betwixt the holy God and your carnal hearts; and this is the height of a creature's sin and misery. It is very observable that in the middle of the black roll of heathen's sins, Rom. i. 29—31, that noxious root, "hatred of God," being in the midst, diffuseth its malignant influence backwards and forwards, to actuate all those sins; not that the creature can directly intend to be an enemy to God, but that a graceless person is virtually, and consequentially an enemy to God, the chief good; as he is an enemy to holiness, justice, and truth, which are divine perfections; so God accounts them that are enemies to his sovereignty. "The carnal mind is enmity itself against God;" and sin turns God to be an enemy.* And there is no person that God hates and despises so much, as this hypocritical pretender, Psal. lxxiii. 20, "O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image;" either it is spoken of wicked men's prosperity, which God slights, as but an imaginary thing, or else the image of temporary profession, with their fantastical faith, piety, and devotion, of which now the false-hearted hypocrite makes a parade, as a man in a dream, conceits himself a great prince; but a day is coming, when

* Luke xix. 27. Rom. viii. 7. Zech. xi. 8. Isa. lxiii. 10.

this great idol shall be broken, and the worshippers of it hissed down to hell with the greatest shame and disdain; for it is said of the ape, because he hath the face, but not the soul of a man, he is the most ridiculous and odious of all creatures: thus a hypocritical Judas is more abhorred of the Lord, than a bloody Pilate, for it is a high crime for an ignoble person to counterfeit himself to be a king's son, and a false friend is more detested than an open enemy. Such are those that pretend frendship to God, and are his real enemies.

5. If you be not new creatures, you are not capable of getting good by any ordinances and providences: nothing will do you good, for you want a principle and capacity to improve any thing: you are spiritually dead, "dead in trespasses and sins," Eph. ii. 1. It is this new creation alone that puts life into you: preaching to you, is but as singing to a deaf man, speaking to a stone: that which is nourishing food to a living man, corrupts, and turns to putrefaction in a dead man's mouth. Though the sinner breathes, yet he lives not; naturally alive, spiritually dead: this is the worst kind of death; for "he is alienated from the life of God." As his works are but dead works, so his soul is but a dead, putrid carcass.* It is true, a poor, carnal, dead sinner, that is naturally alive, may hear a sound in the ministry of the word, but he receives not the sense, nor conceives aright the significancy of what he hears. It is worth your observing, that it is said of Saul's companions: Acts ix. 7, "They heard a voice;" yet it is said, Acts xxii. 9, "They heard not the voice of him that spake to me." Are not these inconsistent? No, they heard indeed a sound, but nothing distinctly, or they might hear a voice, but not Christ's, as Saul did; even so in an ordinance, men

* Eph. iv. 18. Heb. ix. 14.

may hear distinctly the voice of a man, but not the voice of God, so as to "fall down and confess, that God is there of a truth." This is that which makes such a difference of hearers in the same auditory. Some "hear what the Spirit saith;" others profit not from day to day, because the "word is not mixed with faith."* The chymist can do nothing without fire: the sinner will neither do, nor receive good by any thing without the Spirit, and this blessed new creation.

6. Without the new creature, you will not be secured from the worst of sins; for as you want a principle of obedience, so you have no reason to expect assistance from heaven: it is only "God's fear in your hearts, that keeps you from departing from him." Indeed the scripture saith, "Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him." But alas, you want this seed; there is in you the spring of all abominations, there wants nothing but a tap to give it vent. Satan will be ready enough to "fill your hearts to lie to the Holy Ghost;" to betray Jesus, to run into all excess of riot; if the unclean spirit find his house empty of saving grace, though it be swept † from some gross sins by morality, and garnished with gifts and common graces, he will take to himself seven other spirits more wicked, and take faster possession; as those that escaped some gross pollutions, yet "are again entangled, their latter end is worse than their beginning." These may, and likely will wallow in worse mire than ever before. Besides, God may in justice, give you up to your own hearts' lusts, or to "strong delusions, to believe a lie."‡ If God leave you, who knows whither you may

* 1 Cor. xiv. 25. Rev. ii. 7, 11, 17, &c. Heb. iv. 2.
† Jer. xxxii. 40. 1 John iii. 9. Acts v. 3. Matt. xii. 43—45.
‡ 2 Pet. ii. 20—22. Psal. lxxxi. 12. 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11.

be hurried? you will fall downwards into sin, and grow worse and worse, till you be diabolized; as demure as you seem to be, you may commence persecutors, blasphemers, or atheists, and reach that height of impiety that now you shrug and tremble at; yea, you may commit the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost. You say now, God forbid, is thy servant a dog? So said Hazael; but how canst thou be secured? Thou hast no hold of God by faith, and God hath no hold of thee in a covenant relation, for thou wantest the graces of the covenant. Look to thyself, for God will not look to thee, till thou be his; and thou canst not look so to thyself, but thou mayest prove a profane Esau, a scoffing Ishmael, a betraying Judas: who knows where thou wilt stop, whither thou wilt run?

7. If you be not new creatures, you will meet with a woful disappointment. Oh remember the case of the foolish virgins, that too late found they had no oil in their lamps, or grace in their hearts; when the door was shut, and they were shut out, and cried, "Lord, open to us." Oh what an overwhelming word was that, "I know you not." It will not be loud cries, or heart-rending lamentations, that will pierce the ears of a righteous God. Oh think how dreadful it will be to go off the stage "with a lie in your right hand." To walk all your days by "sparks of your own kindling, and lie down in sorrow."* It would vex any man to be cheated with pebbles for pearls, flint for diamond. Men say, when they are deceived, they would rather have given three times as much, than to be thus overreached: but thus it is with you, the devil imposeth on you, and lest you should see your mistake, he holds his black hand before your eyes, the god of this world

* Matt. xxv. 8—12. Isa. xliv. 20. l. 11.

blindeth you, and carries you to hell in a golden dream, in a fool's paradise. It is a dreadful case, if your eyes be never opened till the flames of hell flash in your scorched faces. If there be no discovery till there be no remedy, as some diseases are past cure when they are known, a graceless life brings despair and death. O consider, poor sinner, what relief wilt thou have in thy dying groans? When this king of terrors, this grim sergeant lays his cold hand of arrest upon thee; oh what horror will seize upon thee! When thy fine spun hope must be as the spider's web, swept away with God's besom, or give up the ghost; when thou breathest thy last, what a dreadful case will thy soul be in? Alas! what wilt thou be profited shouldst thou gain the world, when God taketh away thy soul? * Thou hadst better die a dog, a toad, a serpent, or the vilest creature, than a man, if thou be not a new creature; for the upshot of their misery is but an inlet to thine; it is a sad case for a poor sinner to leave the world, and not know whither he is going; he must not stay, and he dares not die. If his eyes be opened, and he sees hell flames flashing in his eyes, oh, with what a shriek must his poor confounded soul descend into that infernal lake of fire and brimstone! this will be a day of desperate sorrow; Isa. viii. 22, when men shall "look to the earth, and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness." Who can conceive duly of the astonishing horrors of a despairing soul!

8. Who can tell how quickly this anguish may seize upon you? you now live at ease, and fear not, because you feel no danger like Laish of old, and Rome at this day. But when you say, "Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon you, as travail upon

* Job xviii. 14. viii. 14. xi. 20. Matt. xvi. 26. Job xxvii. 8, 9.

a woman with child, and you shall not escape." It is a dreadful evil to be surprised. The poor, graceless sinner is not sure to be another night out of hell: such a voice may come to thee, as to that senseless, secure wretch, that reckoned upon years, "This night shall thy soul be required of thee." Poor sinner, thou art in continual danger, God is angry with thee every day,* and stands with his sword whet, and bow bent, and his arrows stringed, and directed to thy heart; yea, it will come as a shower, suddenly, violently, inevitably; upon the wicked "he shall rain fire and brimstone, yea, snares, and a horrible tempest," Psal. xi. 6. God, thine enemy, stands over thee as an enemy with a sword of vengeance in his hand, ready to cut thee in pieces; and though thou sleepest, yet "thy judgment of a long time sleeps not, nor does thy damnation slumber," 2 Pet. ii. 3. Oh, who would continue one hour in such a case, when thy life hangs in doubt, nay, thy immortal soul is hanging over hell by the small brittle thread of thy natural life. Surely if thou wert condemned and to be executed to-morrow, thou wouldst be much concerned to prevent or prepare for death. Oh sinner, bethink thyself, the Judge standeth before the door, James v. 9. Heaven or hell may attend the next step thou takest, the next breath thou breathest: for any thing thou knowest, the commission may be gone out, "cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground," Luke xiii. 7, 9. At least, it may be the last year, week, day, or hour of indulgence; madman that thou art, to stand in the place where all God's arrows fly: thou art the centre where all the curses of law and gospel meet. The Roman emperor wondered that a knight slept so securely, who was in great debt, and sent for his pillow. Surely thy pillow is very soft, or

* 1 Thess. v. 3. Luke xii. 19, 20. Psal. vii. 11, 12.

thy heart very hard, that can sleep under such debts to justice, and not fear an arrest to carry thee to the prison of hell. The plague is running on thee, and a "Lord have mercy on thee," is upon thy door, and will not this alarm thee to look about thee?

9. The possibility of this new creation will aggravate thy misery. Hadst thou lived in Turkey or India, and never heard of the first creation, or the fall, or means of recovery, or a possibility of being made new by the second Adam, thy case had been excusable, at least more tolerable; so saith our Saviour, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin," John xv. 22. The old sinner must go into old Tophet, Isa. xxx. 33. And the lost man will have nothing to ease his torments, not a drop of honey in his bitter gall; there was to be no oil nor frankincense in the offering of jealousy, Numb. v. 15. Why so? because it was a memorial bringing iniquity to remembrance. Just so this dreadful memorial in hell will bring home the sinner's slighting of grace, hardening of his heart against the reproofs of the word, suggestions of the Spirit, checks of conscience, counsels of ministers, and all these shall be as scorpions to sting him, as oil to the flame, to make it burn hotter. Oh woe is me, will he say, ministers warned me, and told me of my danger, but I heeded them not; I did not believe that things would ever come to this pass. Oh that I had regarded the things that belong to my peace, but now it is too late, my day is over, my sun is set, the door is shut, the gulf is fixed, and my soul shut up in everlasting darkness. If you remain impenitent, these will be your despairing groans another day. Oh take warning while it is called to-day; for there will be nothing to mitigate, but much to aggravate your miseries, and

thus those two scriptures are reconciled, Rev. xiv. 10, "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation:" that is, without the least ingredient of comfort, no sugar in that bitter cup of wormwood. But it is said, Psal. lxxv. 8, "In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red, it is full of mixture:" that is, of dreadful ingredients, to aggravate the sorrows of the lost. Yea, these wicked souls shall drink the dregs thereof, and wring them out; that is, their hearts shall meditate terror, and their consciences shall force out the tormenting circumstances of their past lives, and that worm shall never die, but be gnawing at their heart-strings for evermore.

Lastly, You must undoubtedly be shut out of heaven, if you live and die without this new creation. I told you, that this new creature prepares for heaven, I will now assign some reasons, why it is impossible any soul destitute of it, should go to heaven; it is indeed as possible for a devil to be saved as a poor, finally unregenerate sinner. Because,

(1.) A soul without this new creation, hath no interest inChrist; "for if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," 2 Cor. v. 17. This is clear, and it is as clear that there is "no salvation in any other than in Christ," Acts iv. 12. You must mount to heaven alone; if you think to ascend any other way than upon the ladder of Jacob, as Constantine told Acesius long ago, it is a vain attempt, and mere folly not to say madness to divide asunder, what God hath joined so inviolably together; holiness and happiness, a new nature and a new state; if you rend them, God will rend you.

(2.) It is impossible you should walk in the way to heaven, without being new creatures, for the end can

never be attained without the use of the means. Reason tells us, that he that would arrive at London, must go by land or water, in ships, or on horseback, by a coach, or on foot, or by some means or other; or he can never come thither. So it is here, God hath prescribed means and methods for attaining eternal happiness, and bids us enter in at the strait gate, Matt. vii. 13, 14, "Yea, strive to enter in at the strait gate;" and adds, "That many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able," Luke xiii. 24. How shall they then enter, that neither strive, nor seek, nor make any essay to enter? and how can they seek or strive, that have no strength; nay, that have no life, as is the case with an unregenerate sinner, who is dead in trespasses and sins? and till the grace of God infuse new life into him, with this new creature, he can neither stir hand nor foot in a spiritual sense, heaven-wards.

(3.) Nay, he that is not a new creature, hath no heart, mind, or will to be saved; and God saves no man against his will, but his grace makes men truly willing; and this change of the will is a considerable part of the new creation, and it is a sovereign act of free grace, "thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." None follow the Captain of our salvation to heaven, but volunteers, and there is great need of a vigorous will, for heaven must be taken by storm, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." No man will be obedient, except he be willing; there must be the imprimis of a willing mind, before there be an active hand, a worshipping knee, or a walking foot;* they whose spirits do not make them willing, will not remove from sin, or move one step heaven-wards; and hence it is, that our blessed Saviour chargeth men's rejection of him

* Psal. cx. 3. Matt. xi. 12. 2 Cor. viii. 12.

upon their wills, "You will not come to me that you may have life, and why will ye die, O house of Israel?" This is the true reason of sinners' undoing, they will not choose salvation, and so virtually and as a consequence, they destroy themselves. If a man will not eat, he cannot live; if a man drink poison, he will die; and he that will not use means of salvation, cannot be saved; "how shall we escape, if we neglect" much more wilfully reject "so great salvation?"* And how should it be otherwise, if men be not converted, and become new creatures?

(4.) What should the old creature do in heaven? heaven would be no heaven to him; the heavenly Jerusalem is another kind of thing than most take it to be. What wild, grovelling conceptions have sensual men of heaven? as though it were Mahomet's paradise, or the heathen's elysian fields, wherein men may gratify their senses, or wallow in pleasures. Alas, a man may say to these ignorant souls, as our Lord to Zebedee's children, "You know not what you ask;" you would go to heaven; yes, you would fain be saved, but do you know what heaven is? I will tell you briefly, heaven consists in a freedom from all sin, a perfection of grace, enjoyment of God, employment in divine praises, love, delight in God, meditation on him, together with the ecstacy and transport of all the soul's faculties in immediate communion with him. And what awkward conception hath a carnal, worldly man of these blessed privileges? they would be no advantage to him at all, but rather a torment to him who hates God, who runs from him, and cannot abide to come near him in any duty, who likes not the society of God's saints, delights in sinful practices, and dallies with Satan's temptations. Can men imagine they shall take cards and

* John v. 40. Ezek. xviii. 31. Hos. xiii. 9. Heb. ii. 3.

dice, cups and harlots with them to heaven? Nay, can men take fair houses, full bags, or worldly business into another world? Can they make great purchases, gather great rents, or break jests with their companions in a future state? Alas, a poor carnal heart is soon weary of duties, much more would he be in heaven; a sermon is too long, prayer is tedious, "when will the sabbath be gone?" Can those who hold such language be fit to enjoy God in an eternal sabbath of rest? nay, the poor guilty sinner cares not for coming near to God, the sight of God is terrible to him, as it was to fallen Adam; indeed without converting grace, introducing this new creature and divine nature, the soul would be altogether strange to God, or any converse with a holy and glorious God; even the sanctified themselves, by reason of the remainders of corruption in them, have often much ado to bring their hearts to converse with God, especially when they lie under a sense of guilt, even a Peter then cries out, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord;" much more will a graceless soul not dare to come near to God; "A hypocrite shall not come before him;" he will not, and God will not suffer him. But a gracious heart can truly say, "It is good for me to draw nigh to God."* Communion with God is his heaven upon earth; therefore this God will be his salvation, himself is his best heaven; but a carnal heart knows not what this means, and is therefore incapable of heaven.

* Luke v. 8. Job xiii. 16. Psalm lxxiii. 28.

CHAP. VIII.

SOME OBJECTIONS OF SINNERS ANSWERED, IN REFERENCE TO THEIR BECOMING NEW CREATURES.

It is much if a carnal mind, with the devil's help, have not something to say against the thing itself, or attempts after it, by way of excuse.

1. *Objection*, Who can in this world be so qualified for heaven, the best come infinitely short. I have heard it said, that as the soul passeth out of the body, it is then perfected and qualified for its enjoyment of God; no man can expect it before; and though I cannot so delight in God, and his service now, yet I hope God will perfect my soul in the instant of its separation from the body. I answer,

(1.) There is a habitual and an actual adaptedness for heaven, as I have at large explained in a treatise on Col. i. 12, called "Meetness for Heaven,"* and every child of God, after the first impartation of grace to him, and change of his state and relation God-wards, is put into a capacity for communion with God, in this and in the other world, but increase in grace, and exercise of grace do daily capacitate him for further communion with God. No man can expect he will be a perfect man, till he be a man: perfection of degrees follows that of parts. You must first be in Christ, or else you will not arrive "at the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," Eph. iv. 12, 13.

(2.) That man feeds himself with a vain, groundless hope of being saved, and perfected at death, who is careless and graceless in life, for he hath no promise to nourish such persuasion. Did God ever say, "Live

* Included in this Volume.—*Ed.*

as thou listest, and at the instant of death I will infuse spiritual life into thy soul, trust me for that at thy expiring breath, I will give thee that then, which will qualify thee for heaven, and make thee then in love with me, though thou never caredst for me all thy life long." Where do you find such a promise? and who but a mad man will put all to a desperate venture at the last gasp? You have more reason to fear he will not, than to hope he will give you grace; nay, you have a dreadful threatening, that "because he called and you refused, you shall call and cry, and he will not answer," Prov. i. 24—28. And you have a terrible instance of the fruitless cries of the foolish virgins, Matt. xxv. 10. And who are you that the great God should be at your beck? He can and will hear the least whimper of a child, but regards not the howling of a dog: he may and will say, "Go to the gods, the lusts you have served, I know you not, I own you not for mine." This is not a time for getting, but using grace; yea, death is a time for perfecting the work of grace. Woe be to that wretched man that hangs his eternal state on the uncertain working of the principle of life, in the moment of death.

2 *Obj.* But if I be not yet a new creature, I may be; there is time enough before me, I am young, and yet in my full strength, of a healthy constitution, and may live long: let old persons that are going off the stage, look after this new creation, I have other things to mind.

Answ. (1.) Alas, man, art thou certain thou shalt live till the next year, the next month, week, day, or hour? Have not many as young as thou art, gone to the grave before thee, and what assurance hast thou of thy life another moment? For "what is our life but a fleeting vapour?" it is a bubble, a blast, a shadow, a

dream, smoke; yea, every man in his "best estate is altogether vanity,"* as flourishing grass in the morning, cut down before evening. If you fall not by some force of outward casualty, you carry your bane lurking in your bosoms. Have you a lease of your lives, as Hezekiah had? You have little reason to boast yourselves of to-morrow, "for you little know what a pregnant day may bring forth," Prov. xxvii. 1. It may land thy soul in eternity! therefore despatch this main work at present.

(2.) The longer thou deferrest, the more difficulty wilt thou find; thy heart will be daily more "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Custom in sin will make conscience more brawny. A sickness may easily be cured at first, but when it gets into the nerves, and bones, or strikes to the heart, it becomes incurable; so it is with soul maladies. O what mischief may a thief do, if suffered to lodge one night in your house! Besides, the life or death of the soul may hang upon this point of time; it is often limited to a day, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."† Who can tell but God may say after this day, "My Spirit shall strive no more with them?" Gen. vi. 3. You may provoke God to withdraw; O, how many instances have we of thousands that have lost their day, and have been undone for ever.

3 *Obj.* If I become a new creature, there will be so much strictness and austerity in praying, reading, watching, and holy walking, that it will never be borne, it will make me melancholy and rob me of the joy and comfort of my life.

Answ. (1.) Though the possessor of the new creature lose sensual delights, which are madness, rather

* James iv. 14. Job vii. 7. Psal. xxxix. 5. xc. 5, 6.
† Heb. iii. 13. Jer. xiii. 23. Heb. iv. 7. 2 Cor. vi. 2.

than true joy, Eccl. ii. 2: yet he may retain the lawful comforts of life. It is true, that he must lay aside lascivious jests, wanton songs, unlawful gaming, excessive drinking, blasphemous stage plays, and other things of a similiar description; but there is no real content in these, to a generous spirit, but they bring guilt and wrath; while the gracious soul may take as much, or more real pleasure in relations and worldly enjoyments, paying due attention to circumstances of time, measure, and freedom from scandal, as another man; nay, now he experiences the blessing of God in his enjoyments, as he hath a right to them in Christ, as they are freed from the curse, sweetened with God's love, helping him in God's service on his way towards heaven; and the new creature puts wisdom into the Christian, to set every thing in its place and order, so that he enjoys himself with more pleasure in a mean condition, than many wicked men in their abundance.

(2.) A man hath never true solid joy and peace till he be a new creature; this, and this only forms the basis of strong consolation. Serious godliness is no such melancholy life, as the carnal world imagine. Suppose the Christian do labour, toil, and take pains in God's service; love oils the wheels of his soul, and he takes as much pleasure therein, as Jacob did for Rachel. God spices every step of his way, "Wisdom's ways are pleasantness." "The severest commands of God are not grievous," but delightful, "the Spirit helps his infirmities,"* enlarges his heart, he mounts up with wings as eagles; he is sure his profits will answer his pains; he that digs in a golden mine, is paid for every stroke he strikes; nay, there is a recompense at present, "in keeping thy commandments, there is great reward," Psal. xix. 11. You hear of the saint's sor-

* Prov. iii. 17. I John v. 3. Rom. viii. 26.

row for sin, grief for God's withdrawments, distress from Satan's assaults, but you see not his joy, "a stranger intermeddles not with it," Prov. xiv. 10; he hath comforts that none know, or can deprive him of; yea, he hath more comfort in his tears for sin, than a wicked man hath in gratifying his senses, and committing sin; in the midst of the carnal man's joy his heart is sad; in the midst of the Christian's sorrow for sin, his heart is oft full of joy; do but try a religious course, and you would not exchange it for the wicked's rant.

4 *Obj.* But if I leave my old companions, they will laugh me to scorn, I shall be accounted a fool, a dotard, an enthusiast, or a fanatic, all that is bad; and this I cannot brook, and indeed I know not how to discard and disoblige my old intimate comrades.

Answ. (1.) If owning God and saving your precious souls be a disobliging of them, they are better lost than found. Our friends are dear, but God is dearer; religion binds you to forsake your own people, and your father's house, Psal. xlv. 10: to hate father and mother, in comparison of, or standing in competition with Christ, Luke xiv. 26. And it is the best match you can make; you will not repent it, if to enjoy the society of genuine Christians you forego those syren songs of bewitching companions, which lead down to hell; if you forsake such incarnate devils, for the ministry of blessed angels; yea, if you renounce the devil for communion with a holy God, you will have little reason to be afraid or ashamed of such an exchange.

(2.) As for their hatred, scorn or reproach, read Isa. li. 7, 8, "Fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings;" the tongue of such wicked villains is no slander; better be reviled than praised by some. Our Lord saith, "Woe be to you, when all

men speak well of you." When the Papists called Luther an apostate, he accounted himself a blessed apostate from the synagogue of Satan, to the church of God. And what if an Ishmael mock Isaac, or a Shimei rail at David, are they worse for lying tongues bespattering them? Bright stars may be called by ugly names, as bear, dragon, but they are bright still; so may you be. A heathen Seneca could say, and glory in it, they speak of evil of me, but they are evil men.* And is it not better to be reproached by bad men for being good, than to be condemned by God for being wicked? Doth not Christ "bid you rejoice and be exceeding glad?" Matt. v. 12. Surely you may wear these as trophies and badges of honour; so did Paul glory in Christ's cross, as an old soldier in his scars received in the wars for his prince; the Christians of old rejoiced that "they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ;" they looked on that reproach as their greatest honour and ornament. You deserve not the name of Christian, if you will not bear a foul word from the foul mouths of men, for him who despised the shame for your sakes. If men clip your credit, to make it good weight with God, and rub your crown with dust, to make it brighter, you will be no loser; if you be "reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you."†

5 *Obj.* I see no such beauty or excellency in these puritans and precisians, who pretend to be new creatures; they are no better than their neighbours; all are sinners, and so are they; nay, I have seen them slip into scandalous sins, they are proud, and envious, and covetous; they are but a pack of hypocrites.

* Mala de me loquuntur, sed mali.

† Gal. vi. 17. Acts v. 41. Heb. xii. 2. 1 Pet. iv. 14.

Answ. (1.) Take heed of speaking evil of the persons and things that you know not: worldly people are not competent judges of God's children. These "are hidden ones," kings in disguise, "it doth not yet appear what they are or shall be." The king's daughter is all glorious within." "The life of saints is hid with Christ in God."* You know not what they do alone, much less do you know their consciences. Beware of rash judgment; you know neither their best nor their worst, there is a veil upon the face of their souls. There is a hidden man of the heart, which is invisible to the eyes of spectators; and if these gracious souls should open their experience to you, you would judge it a paradox, or a riddle, or mere enthusiasm. Wisdom is too high for a fool: the learned Nicodemus had odd and awkward conceptions of the new birth, John iii. 4. "The natural man knoweth not the things of the Spirit," 1 Cor. ii. 14. If you had new eyes, you would be fitter to judge of things that differ. Suspend your censures, call them not hypocrites, whom God will own for children: a blind man is not fit to judge of colours.

(2.) It is true, all are sinners, yet there is a vast difference of sinners. "Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin," ἁμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ, doth not work sin, he makes not sinning his trade; his business is to walk in the ways of God, and "if he be overtaken with a fault," he discovers it, mourns for it, riseth out of his falls by repentance, he hates sin more, becomes more watchful and jealous of himself, prays, and desires strength from Christ, "to crucify the flesh." "Sin hath not dominion over him;"† but he makes progress in mortification: and ordinarily this child of

* Psal. lxxxiii. 3. 1 John iii. 2. Psal. xlv. 13. Col. iii. 3.
† 1 John iii. 9. Gal. vi. 1. v. 24. Rom. vi. 14.

God doth not fall into any gross and scandalous sin, or if at any time God doth suffer him to fall foully, yet it costs him dear; it may be broken bones, as it did David; and God can heal his backslidings, and make him more humble after. However there is a vast difference betwixt a sheep stepping into the mire, and a swine wallowing in the mire. Some are, and some are not "the spots of God's children," Deut. xxxii. 5. You have more need to judge yourselves, than censure others for being hypocrites. Hear what the Reverend Mr. Hildersham saith in this case:* "Let none say of professors, these gadders after sermons, these holy brethren, that stand so much upon sincerity, can abide nothing that savours of Popery; these precise fools must be singular, forsooth; they dare not swear—they are no better than hypocrites." And he adds, "though these things be found in some hypocrites, yet they are no signs to know a hypocrite by, nor are they hypocrites that do thus; thou that scornest a man for this, bewrayest the profaneness of thy own heart, and openest thy mouth against heaven," Psal. lxxiii. 9.

6 *Obj.* You told us this work is a creation. Can a man create himself? You said sinners are dead; surely it is not in the power of a dead man to make himself alive? You said this is the work of omnipotency, God must do all. Alas, what can man do of himself?

Answ. (1.) You are not naturally dead; though spiritually dead, yet you are alive; God hath given you rational souls, faculties capable of knowing, loving, and enjoying himself. You are not senseless stocks or stones, nor mere brutes; there is in you a remote aptitude, if not a present promptness, to receive grace: you have the noble faculty of a self-reflecting con-

* Hild. on Psal. li. page 699.

science, that is "the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly," Prov. xx. 27. It can discover moral good and evil, yea, "it can excuse or accuse in what you do," right or wrong, Rom. ii. 14, 15. You might be much better if you minded this light within you, the light of natural conscience. How can you expect more, till you improve what you have? Nature can do little towards grace, yet moral principles cherished and improved, may be some fence against vicious inclinations, and prevent a custom in sinful practices; however, it is dangerous to imprison the common notices of a Deity, Rom. i. 18, or moral duty: this is the road to obliterate them, this shuts the door against grace, and opens the sluices of vice. Nourish what is good in thee: who can tell what it may come to at last?

(2.) God commands the use of means; and though he hath not bound himself, yet he hath bound every man to the utmost of his power to be tending towards God. Divines say, That though no exercise of common grace can merit special grace, yet God is not wanting in his further grace, to those that have made a due improvement of common grace, and done what in them lay towards their own salvation. Your business is to "work out your own salvation," Phil. ii. 12; for it is "God that worketh in you the will and the deed."

It is an old saying of St. Augustine, "He that made thee without thyself, will not save thee without thyself." God loves to second man's endeavours; he is never wanting to the diligent. The precept commands, the gospel promise will assist.* God hath not lost his right to command, though we have no might to obey; his authority must sway with us, though we have not ability to do his requirement;† he bids us to be

* Lex jubet, gratia juvat. † Præcipit Deus quod ipse præstat.

up and doing, and he will take us by the hand and help us. Try, man, in so necessary a work as thy soul's eternal happiness; thou hast lost much labour in other cases, thou mayest not lose it in this: there is a *may be* in it, and that is warrant enough for such a venture. Be laborious, and thou mayest possess grace.

7 *Obj.* But I may as well sit still, as rise up to fall; I shall never hold out, I see so many temptations of a subtle devil, oppositions of a furious world, and strong corruptions of a treacherous heart, that I do foresee I shall not be able to stand; I had better not begin at all, than begin in the spirit and end in the flesh, and so sink my apostate soul deeper.

Answ. (1.) Art thou in good earnest, when thou makest this objection? or dost thou compliment God, and make it an excuse and evasion? If the latter, and this be but to save thee the labour of being serious in religion, thy case is lamentable; thou hast yet but slight thoughts of God, thy soul, or of heaven, that makest such frivolous excuses, to incur a certain damnation. But if thou be in good earnest, it will put thee upon the search of thy heart, whether thou be sincere, that thou mayest not build upon a sandy foundation; and if indeed thou art jealous of thyself, and afraid of apostacy, this very fear is the best security against falling away: "I will," saith God, "put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me; blessed is he that feareth always." This godly fear will make you avoid sin and all its occasions, improve talents, time, and means of grace, and put you upon all methods to grow in grace and gain assurance. A caution is necessary to the best.* But be sure yours is a godly jealousy, arising from a sense of the evil of sin, and your own

* Jer. xxxii. 40. Prov. xxviii. 14. Heb. iii. 12, 13. iv. 1.

weakness, and not a mere conception of your hypocritical hearts.

(2.) If once this new creature be truly formed in thy heart, it will be permanent and abiding; not but that it is a creature, and so loseable of itself, but by virtue of God's covenant and promise, it is "an incorruptible seed, a well of living waters, springing up to everlasting life." If once this work be savingly wrought, though it be but a spark, an embryo of grace, the God of heaven will look after his own creature, you shall "be kept by the power of God through faith to salvation." None shall pluck you out of the Father's hands.* Nothing can separate; the gates of hell shall not prevail against you. Fear not, you have the Father's care, the Son's prayer, the Holy Ghost abiding in you for ever.† Hypocrites will be apostates; a rotten core will spread to the skin. It is very rare to see a hypocrite undiscovered till death; though the foolish virgins held out long, yet it appeared at last they had no oil in their vessels. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us," 1 John ii. 19. Take thou care of thy sincerity, and God will take care of thy perseverance: God will not renounce his own image: Christ will not forsake his members. If thy state and standing were in thy own hands, thou wouldst as surely lose thy integrity, as Adam his innocency; but "we are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation," 1 Pet. i. 5.

There is one thing I fear more than all the rest, and that is a lazy, slothful, indifferent spirit, that will not take any pains in God's work, nor in the concerns of the soul, but think grace must drop into their gaping

* 1 Pet. i. 23. John iv. 14. 1 Pet. i. 5. John x. 28, 29.

† Matt. xvi. 18. Rom. viii. 39. Phil. i. 6. 1 John ii. 1. ii. 27.

mouths; this sloth hath killed thousands of sinners. Oh, it will cost a man trouble, care, and pains, and this he cannot brook. And do men think to grow rich without labouring, careful endeavours, and travelling to markets? And can they think to go to heaven, or get grace without taking pains? It is true, it is not merely pains that will do it, but sloth will lose it; and without pains-taking, nothing that is excellent will be obtained; for the more choice things are, the more hardly are they attained. * I am sure Christians of old "laboured hard, that they might be accepted of God," 2 Cor. v. 9. And the apostle tells the Hebrews, that "God doth not forget their work and labour of love:" and urges them "to shew the same diligence, and not be slothful, but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises," Heb. vi. 10—12.

Let the slothful person ask himself these questions:—Whether the pains of hell be not more intolerable, than the pains God requires to be taken to escape it?—Or, whether heaven will not requite all his pains to obtain it?—Or, whether he take not more pains to scrape together a necessary supply of wants, or some thick clay usually called wealth?—Or, whether thousands take not more pains to get to hell, than God requireth of him to travel to heaven? And let the unhappy sluggard know, that by the time he hath been an hour in the intolerable torments of a future state, he would be glad to be turned into the world again, though upon the hardest terms of obedience, mortification, and doing all things within the range of human capacity. But alas, men in the present state are made up so much of sense, and understand so little of invisible realities, that they choose rather to perish eternally, than to endeavour

* Difficilia quæ pulchra.

to live holily: therefore "men's destruction is of themselves," Hos. xiii. 9: they "will not come to Christ, that they may have life," John v. 40. It is God's ordination, that men's own estimate, choice, and endeavours shall be the necessary preparatives to fruition: † and hence it is, that the slothful servant, was a wicked servant, and fared and sped according to his sloth, Matt. xxv. 26.

CHAP. IX.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE TRIAL OF OUR SPIRITS, WHETHER WE BE INDEED NEW CREATURES.

THE fourth and last thing proposed, is what the apostle calls *παιδείαν τὴν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ*, that is, instruction in righteousness; and this I shall rank under these four divisions: I shall,

I. State the nature, parts, and properties of the new creation, for our assistance in the examination of our state.

II. Direct what those should do to obtain it, who feel or fear they are yet deficient.

III. Show how such should act, live, and conduct themselves, as do find upon Scripture grounds, and good experience, that this change is savingly wrought within them.

IV. Answer some queries or cases of conscience, for the satisfaction of such as are doubtful of their sincerity, or would be further informed on some points about this new creature. All these I must briefly despatch.

* Nemo nolens bonus aut beatus est.

I. It is of very great concernment for every rational soul to know and be sure on some certain grounds, whether he be a new creature.

I might here refer the reader to the description I gave at first of this new creation.—It was called a supernatural grace, as to its general nature—for its particular property or nature, it was styled a gospel grace—as to its subject, it is in the soul of a sinner—the instrumental cause of it, is the word of God—the efficient cause, is the Holy Ghost—the proper immediate effect, is a great spiritual change—the completeness of this change, has a reference to state, constitution and relation—the pattern is the divine image or likeness—the rule of it, is the word of God—the end, is the glory of God, and the soul's happiness in its communion with him.

You see then this new creature is very comprehensive, it includes the whole encyclopædia, as I may say, or compass of experimental and practical religion.

It is a relation, not one quality, nor yet one single habit, neither one star, nor yet a constellation of graces, but a relation or rectitude, and orderly correspondence of the faculties proceeding from the impartation of all those habits and qualities to a person, (as a learned man observes,)* wherein the appetite is subject to the will, the will to reason, the rectified reason to God, and the conversation corresponding to this inward principle, not completely or perfectly in point of degree, as it was in Adam's soul, in the state of innocency, but by integrity of the parts, so far as the soul is sanctified in this life, till it become perfect in heaven. It is, say divines, πνευματικὴ ἅλυσις, a spiritual chain, wherein all virtues and graces are linked, concreated with Adam, and imparted to the Christian in

* Dr. Arrow's Tract. Sacra. page 138.

this new creation, whereby he hath a power to act as a Christian in this lower world, in all christian exercises, to which God in his word calls him.

This examination of the new creature, I shall reduce to the following particulars:

Preparatives to it, parts of it, properties thereof, and its effects and fruits.

Had I time and room, these might be largely insisted upon; but I shall restrict myself to a short review of them.

First, For the preparatives or antecedents that lead to the new creation; not that a creature can prepare himself for it, but the same God who creates, doth something on the soul preliminary, as the chaos and darkness preceded the beautiful fabric of the world: so God produces,

1. A sense of sin, wrath and the undone state of the soul, this is a new state of feeling; for formerly the sinner neither felt not feared evil, but thought his state as good as any one's; nor doubted his own salvation; now a spirit of bondage to fear hath seized on him; "he is shut up as a sheep for the slaughter." "The law is a severe schoolmaster, and worketh wrath."* Now the sinner cries, "Woe is me, I am undone, I never thought I had been in this miserable state; I see I am a condemned malefactor at the dreadful bar of a sin-avenging judge; my mouth is stopped, I have not a word to say for myself, why sentence should not be executed upon me; woe is me, I shall perish for ever."

2. A discovery of his helpless state. He cannot help or deliver himself, the whole world cannot; it is not within the power of men or angels to bring any relief to his forlorn, perishing soul. I am, saith the poor sinner, helpless, fatherless, Hos. xiv. 3, succour-

* Rom. viii. 15. Gal. iii. 22—24. Rom. iv. 15.

less; I am "without strength, in me dwells no good thing." I could provoke God, but I cannot please him; heaven is shut against me, and I have no key to open it, hell gapes for me, and I know not how to escape it; I hang over flames, I lie in chains, and all the world cannot break them, "silver and gold will not redeem me." "Great men are vanity, good men have no oil to spare." If I sat upon a prince's throne, I could not purchase or command a pardon, "The redemption of the soul is precious, it ceaseth for ever."* My case grows worse and worse.

3. A serious inquiry after a remedy. When the poor sinner is thus puzzled and non-plust, and knows not which way to turn himself, then he begins to ask new questions, not as he was wont, "Who will shew us any good" of worldly advantage? Psal. iv. 6, no, but his tune is altered, now he cries, "Men and brethren what shall I do?" Acts ii. 37. xvi. 30; O sirs, "What shall I do to be saved?" O you ministers, christian friends, did you ever know any case like mine? Is it possible that ever I should find mercy? Is not the day of grace past? I fear I have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, woe is me, what course shall I take? I see nothing but bare walls at home; is there relief to be found for a poor pining soul? tell me, O tell me, what door I must knock at, and how I must knock, that I may speed?

4. Sad thoughts of heart upon discovery of the remedy. Oh, saith the poor sinner, you tell me God is a "merciful God, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin," Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7; but I spy one red letter in his name, *that will by no means clear the guilty.* Now I am guilty, and I have read that the arms of justice and mercy are of equal length, both infinite;

* Rom. v. 6, 7. 1 Pet. i. 18. Matt. xxv. 9. Psal. xlix. 7.

how must justice be satisfied? I am sure not by me, in my own person. Well, the gospel tells the sinner, that the wards of the lock are fitted; this chancery will relieve the condemned sinner; Christ in our room hath suffered and satisfied justice for us; yea, saith the penitent, but how shall I have interest therein? It is answered, by faith. Alas, saith he, I am but where I was, I can no more believe, than I can keep the whole law; O this unbelieving heart kills me, binds me over to wrath; still I would believe, but I cannot, my faith is but unbelief; I thought believing was the easiest thing in the world, now the Spirit hath convinced me, I neither do, nor can believe without divine influence.* I would give all the world, that I could believe.

5. The removal of obstructions. A stubborn will is by grace made "willing in the day of God's power." Now prejudices are removed, though Nathaniel say, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" yet if he come and see, he will believe; this was the woman of Samaria's case.† Alas, saith the soul, I have been foolish, and ready to find fault with God's way of justifying and saving poor sinners, and said of the gospel dispensation, how can these things be? but I am at last satisfied, that a revelation from God is not only authentic, but most rational; still I have within me strange imaginations, and "high things that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God." Well, God comes with his spiritual weapons, and pulls down these strong holds, dismounts the sinner's carnal confidence, and levels these high mountains of opposition, leading captivity captive, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. And now the sinner is content, that God should take his own method in

* Isa. lv. 4. 1 Pet. ii. 24. Mark ix. 24. John xvi. 9. Eph. i. 19.
† Psal. cx. 3. John i. 46—49. iv. 9, 19.

justifying and saving him, by the merits of Christ, without the least respect to any worthiness in himself; and there is much ado to bring the proud heart to this, to forego his own righteousness.

6. Restlessness of spirit in its present state. The sinner is now heavy laden, Matt. xi. 28, and must have rest somewhere, but can enjoy no rest in a sinful state; "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked," Isa. lvii. 21. This is not a state to be rested in, saith the trembling soul, I am got off my former ground, I see my old unregenerate state hopeless and deplorable, yet I fear I am not centred and anchored on Christ. Woe is me, I am fluctuating on the waves betwixt hope and despair, I fear the issue; sometimes I think I see the day break, but clouds and darkness overwhelm me again: however, I am not content with these poor husks of the world in my Christless state in a far country, "I will arise and go to my father," Luke xv. 18. In this quagmire, I find no bottom for the sole of my foot, I must make to firm ground; none but Christ, none but Christ, let me have him, though with "fightings from without, and fears within." I am shifting from post to pillar, let me be dissettled till my soul fix on Christ, "then shall not my heart be troubled, if believing in God, I believe also in Christ," John xiv. 1. Let me never be at rest, till all ways are blocked up but this; if I sit still, I die, 2 Kings vii. 4; if I go to the world, I pine; I will venture upon God's promises, upon Christ's purchase; if I must die, I will die thus; but never did any die at this door.

7. At last the troubled spirit utters its perplexed thoughts in complaints and prayers. God saith, "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself," Jer. xxxi. 18. So methinks I see the disquieted soul creep into a corner to unburden his spirit in this manner:

Lord, here I am, as wicked a malefactor as ever stood at thy bar, and as miserable a beggar as ever lay at thy door; I was condemned as soon as born, and have too, too wofully increased the stock of original sin, by thousands of actual transgressions; I am twice dead, in danger of being "plucked up by the roots," Jude, 12, and cast into the fire of hell; many means hast thou used, but nothing does me good, yet now "thou hast brought me into the wilderness; O speak to my heart." Every sin deserves damnation; Oh, how many hells then do I deserve? Thou art righteous, if thou condemn me; my mouth is stopped, I am found guilty before God, I am self-condemned, thou wilt need no other witness or jury to find me guilty; but Christ suffered and satisfied justice for poor sinners, and why not for me, the chief of sinners? I find not one word in scripture against it, but a proclamation of a general pardon to all; Christ with all his benefits is offered to me in the ministry of the word, upon the condition of faith and repentance. It is true, I can neither repent nor believe, but they are both included in the absolute grant of the gospel covenant, which gives what it requires. Lord, give me a gospel repentance unto life, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; I hang on thee, blessed Jesus, who wast exalted on purpose "to give repentance and forgiveness of sins," with every grace and every blessing.*

Secondly, The parts of this new creature lie in the renovation of the several faculties of the soul, which consists of—the mind and understanding—the conscience—the will—the affections, which are the acts and tendencies of the will.

1. The new creature consists much in the illumination of the mind, which is called "a renewing in the

* Hos. ii. 14. Rom. iii. 19. 1 Tim. i. 15. Acts v. 31.

spirit of the mind," Eph. iv. 23. Interpreters have been much perplexed to know what is meant by the spirit of the mind. Calvin saith, "The meaning is, we are renewed not only in our inferior appetites, and sensual desires, but in that part of the soul which is esteemed the most noble and excellent." * For the mind is accounted a queen, and almost adored by philosophers. Now the mind is renewed, when there are,

(1.) New conceptions of things, such as it never had before, for a new light is set up in the soul, to see things after another manner, "the eyes of the understanding are now enlightened," Eph. i. 18. Now a person sees more wickedness in his depraved heart, than ever he did, which makes him cry out like Job, "Behold I am vile." "Lord, thou art heaven, I am hell," said Mr. Hooper. Now the soul sees more poison and malignity in sin, than it ever did before; he sees it "exceedingly sinful," as striking at the majesty, and clouding the glory of the holy God,—as crucifying Christ,—as grieving the Holy Spirit. The new creature forms other conceptions of Christ, as "the rose of Sharon, the chief of ten thousand." He looks on God's commands as "not at all grievous," † but pleasant, comfortable, and profitable. He looks on the saints as the "most excellent in the earth." He hath got eyesalve to judge of things as they are; "the spiritual man judgeth all things." ‡

(2.) The new nature brings a new memory; the Christian forgets injuries, and remembers truths; his

* Ego simpliciter accipio, acsi dixisset, Renovemini non tantum quod ad inferiores appetitus aut concupiscentias quæ palam sunt vitiosæ, sed etiam quod ad partem illam animæ quæ nobilissima et præstantissima habetur.—*Calv. in loc.*

† Job xl. 4. Rom. vii. 9—17. Cant. v. 10. 1 John v. 3.

‡ Psalm xvi. 3. Rev. iii. 18. 1 Cor. ii. 15.

memory is sanctified and strengthened, he lays up things in his heart, as the pot of manna was laid up in the ark: he "can abundantly utter the memory of God's great goodness." The new creature is as a phylactery to prompt and put him in mind of God's law. If he hath not a great memory, yet he hath a good memory: God brings sins to remembrance committed many years ago, and the soul is humbled for them, as if but newly committed: and though sometimes the best of God's children are subject to slippery memories, and do need monitors, yet they have minds clarified, and apt to be tenacious of the things of God: "I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance." A hint will bring God and good things into their thoughts again; but wicked men are described by the character of "forgetting God." * Do you make it your business to remember God upon your beds, and in all places? Psalm lxiii. 6.

(3.) The new creation introduces a new counsellor. Formerly the person who has experienced this change, consulted with carnal interest, even in things of religion; if the practice of religion did cross his low and selfish designs, he laid it down; but as soon as this principle acts within him, he saith as Paul did, "immediately, I conferred not with flesh and blood;" God's glory, and the good of his own soul and the souls of others lay uppermost. Now the Christian goes to the sanctuary in arduous cases, and makes the Scriptures (those divine oracles) "his chief counsellors" in his actions, natural, civil, and spiritual;† and dare venture upon nothing but that for which he hath a warrant from God: not, What saith this friend, or the other relation? but what saith God in the case, directly, or

* Psalm cxlv. 7. Numb. xv. 39. 2 Pet. iii. 1. Psalm l. 22.
† Gal. i. 16. Psalm lxxiii. 17. cxix. 24.

by good consequence? See the difference between good Jehoshaphat and Ahab: the former said, "Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of the Lord to-day;" the other made nothing of it. "They soon forgat his works," saith the Psalmist; "they waited not for his counsel:" and "God gives them up to walk in their own counsels." *

(4.) The new creature hath new admiration; the carnal heart wonders at trifling novelties. David prays, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." There indeed he discovers wonders of power, wisdom, holiness, faithfulness, and a display of all God's attributes, but especially of free grace and love in the work of redemption: he sees no reason to admire any thing, but "things the angels desire to look into," and in admiration of which they are in continual ecstacy. O the love of God in sending Christ,—of Christ in becoming man, in taking any of the sons of men to be the children of God. † Ὦ βάθος, "Oh the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God." There only, there is something to be admired: all the glories of the world are but mere contemptible pageantry; the believer can trample them under his feet with a better disdain, than Diogenes trampled on Plato's finery, for he is in a sort "crucified to the world;" and can pass by things seen with a holy scorn, when compared with things unseen, which are eternal. ‡

2. The new creation also affects the conscience, which though it be not a distinct faculty, but of a complex nature, yet it is of great use in the soul of man: and it is necessary that "the heart be sprinkled

* 1 Kings xxii. 5—8. Psalm cvi. 13. lxxxi. 12.
† Psalm cxix. 18. 1 Pet. i. 12. 1 John iii. 1.
‡ Rom. xi. 33. Gal. vi. 14. 2 Cor. iv. 18.

from an evil conscience," which is done by the blood Christ, Heb. x. 22; and that "the conscience be purg- from dead works to serve the living God," and this is effected by the eternal Spirit, Heb. ix. 14. Now there are four offices of conscience, which the new creature doth in a good measure regulate.

(1.) As it is a guide, a discoverer of duty, a bright star in a dark night, a hand in the margin, to shew us what is worth our observing, a schoolmaster to teach us, a monitor to shew our mistakes; and it must be regulated by the word of God, for conscience is cor- rupted, and is apt to be deceived, and to deceive us: it is but an under officer, and must itself be subject to God's law. Hence the Christian seeks to regulate its dictates by the word of truth, and grace brings it to the rule,—What saith my supreme Lord and Master? I must follow thee no further than God's law allows. Now the new creature brings conscience to the word, and saith, Thus far thou must go, and no further: the end of "the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and good conscience, and faith unfeigned," 1 Tim. i. 5. These are always companions; this is a good conscience.

(2.) Conscience is a book, wherein are noted and written down all a man's actions and expressions, even his thoughts and imaginations: it is also a correct and faithful register, to produce them as a faithful witness for, or against a man another day. "The books were opened:" one of these is the book of conscience. Con- science is as a thousand witnesses; if good, the Holy Ghost unites with it, "my conscience bearing me wit- ness in the Holy Ghost;" and this "is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience."* If a person have done any thing amiss, conscience brings it to his re-

* Rev. xx. 12. Rom. ix. 1. 2 Cor. i. 12.

membrance, as the sin of Joseph's brethren made them say, "We are verily guilty." "Now a faithful witness will not lie." A rectified conscience will give in a true testimony to promote repentance, which is therefore called a "bethinking ourselves," or in the Hebrew, "a bringing back upon our hearts." Conscience hath a tenacious memory, and will speak truly in its excusings or accusings;* which is proper to conscience, as conscience, but grace regulates it, and adds some force to it.

(3.) Conscience is a judge to pass sentence upon a man, as the verdict is brought in. It is true, it is but a petty judge under the supreme Judge, yet the great God confirms its judicial sentence: 1 John iii. 20, "If our hearts," that is, our consciences, "condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things." Every man may and must hold private sessions within, preparatory to the great assizes; if he be but passive, and is loath to hearken to the sentence, he is condemned; and this is but a sad prognostic of his being condemned at God's tribunal, which he seeks to escape, as Felix did, but cannot: but if he concur in this sentence, and condemn himself actively and voluntarily, "he shall not be judged or condemned," 1 Cor. xi. 31. Now grace in the heart makes a man do this. I am the man, saith he, I confess both the fact and fault. Art thou so? saith conscience; I must needs then pass sentence upon thee, according to God's righteous law. Well, I yield, saith the soul, I am convicted in this court, and cannot escape the judgment of God: I must fly to the city of refuge.

(4.) Conscience is an avenger, a self-tormentor: a guilty person is one that punishes or afflicts himself; some do this sinfully, by "worldly sorrow which caus-

* Gen. xliii. 21. 1 Kings viii. 47. Rom. ii. 14, 15.

eth death." The Christian must do it penitentially, either for his own sins, or other men's: so Lot "vexed his righteous soul with the sin of Sodom;" the word is ἐβασάνιζεν, he beat and bastinadoed his righteous soul. The godly man must take the whip of conscience with the hand of grace, and scourge himself for his sins: or God will take it with his hand, and chastise him with it, as he did David, whose "heart smote him for numbering the people." The worm of conscience gnawing at the heart, is an acute pain, and will be one of the torments of the wicked in hell. * But the pious man prevents that, when he approves of God's sentence by self-excruciating trouble for sin here: it is a profitable employment of conscience, with its severe lashes to promote godly sorrow.

CHAP. X.

A CONTINUED EXAMINATION OF THE NEW CREATURE, AS TO THE WILL AND AFFECTIONS.

3. ANOTHER subject, wherein the new creature resides, is the will, and this is the hinge of the soul, the master wheel, all which having received a new and different impulse, moves quite another way than what it had done; now the change of the will is the main work of converting grace.

There are four departments of the will, wherein the new creature shews itself.

(1.) In its designs, aims, and intentions. The world and self-interest were the main drift of the will in a

* 2 Cor. vii. 10. 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8. 2 Sam. xxiv. 10. Mark ix. 44.

natural state; all seek their own, Phil. ii. 21, the gratifying of the flesh, sensual appetite, and worldly gain; the universal inquiry is, "Who will shew us any good?" Psal. iv. 6. O for a good bargain, a cheap purchase! another is for strong drink, or dainties of the table, plays or pleasures; another for the smiles of a court, and titles of honour. But the new creature discards and scorns all these, while his aim is the glorifying of God, and enjoyment of him, let "Christ be magnified, and my soul saved," and I can despise or slight all other things, God hath bound them together, and the soul cannot part them. God is the Christian's chief end, in his natural, civil, and spiritual acts; the new man aims at the glory of God. O that my soul may obtain fellowship with God.* I will trample on sinful, worldly selfishness, and spurn this filthy dunghill, when set in competition with God's glory, and the salvation of my own soul; all other things will neither please nor profit this high-bred creature formed within me.

(2.) In the elective power of the will. The new creature chooseth the most proper means to attain the high ends he has in view; as he chooseth God for his portion, so in the first place he chooseth Christ "as the only way, truth and life," John xiv. 6. i. 51; by whom, as the ladder of Jacob, he may ascend to God; for there is no coming to the Father, but by the Son. The will therefore consents to have Christ upon his own terms, and chooseth him above the world; may I have Christ, I will "cast all else as dross at my heels;" away with them, away with them, I would refuse crowns and sceptres in comparison of, or in competition with Christ; the believer comes off freely in his choice of Christ, he is not forced to him as his last shift, to escape perdition, but by a sweet tendency and

* Phil. i. 20. 1 Cor. x. 31. 1 John i. 3. Psal. lxxiii. 25.

propensity of the will, he is touched and attracted with the loadstone of divine grace, "To me to live is Christ," as well as to die with him is gain. The new creature also chooseth the precepts, the promises, and the patterns of the word;* the way of faith and holiness he likewise chooses to walk in, in order to the attaining of happiness; and he never repents this blessed choice.

(3.) There is a cleaving act of the will, a peremptory, resolved adhering to God and his ways: the will is fixed and determined for God, whatever shall be said to the contrary; he is not off and on like "a double minded man, unstable in all his ways," ἀμφίβιος, hanging in suspense, "halting betwixt two opinions;" but cleaves to the Lord with purpose of heart, as "Ruth was stedfastly minded to go with Naomi."† All men on earth, and all the devils in hell shall not alter this resolution; "I will go and return to my father; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress;" let others do as they list, as they dare answer, "I and my house will serve the Lord;"‡ I must not be guided by example or carnal reason, but by the word of God, and having made my choice by the grace of God, I will not change as long as I breathe, no sufferings shall daunt me, no allurements shall entice me from my God.

(4.) There is a resigning act of the will, by which it gives up itself to the will of God. The new creation melts and moulds the will of man into the will of God; as our Lord said, "Not my will, but thine be done," Luke xxii. 42; and those gracious souls, Acts xxi. 14, said, "The will of the Lord be done:" hence Luther durst pray, let my will be done;‖ but came off thus,

* John i. 12. Phil. iii. 7—9. i. 21. Psal. cxix. 30, 111.

† James i. 8. 1 Kings xviii. 21. Acts xi. 23. Ruth i. 16—18.

‡ Luke xv. 18. Psalm xvii. 3. Josh. xxiv. 15.

‖ Fiat voluntas mea.

mine, Lord, because my will shall be thine, there shall be but one will between us; this hath been the language of all the holy men in scripture, Eli, David, Paul. Let the Lord do as seems good to him;* this harmony of wills is a glorious fruit of the new creation; and a pleasing and certain character of the new creature; this brings serenity to the soul in all states, when wind and tide gently go both one way, there is no storm; so when the Christian acquiesceth in God's will, there is great peace in the soul.

4. The new creature is formed in the affections: these are the movements of the will, the *primum mobile*, or main wheel that carries the affections along with it; the affections are characterized either as disliking, or liking; as discovering the aversion or approbation of the soul, and both of them are reduced to sweet order and harmony, according to scripture rule.

(1.) The disliking or disapproving affections: the stream is quite turned into another channel, the soul loathes what it before loved, and bears an implacable hatred, yea, antipathy, not only to sin, but to all appearances of it, 1 Thess. v. 22, and avenues that lead to it, or proceed from it, "hating even the garment spotted by the flesh," Jude, 23, as one detests a coat with the plague in it, as a man's heart riseth against some kind of meats, or a toad for its poisonful quality, or a serpent for its sting, or rather for its loathsome nature. David saith, "I hate, and abhor lying," Psal. cxix. 163; he cannot use words enough to express his antipathy to hypocrisy. And true hatred is πρὸς τὰ γένη, against all kinds of what we hate, "I hate every false way," ver. 104, saith the holy man. The new creature makes the Christian not only angry at sin, as against his interest, or as a man may be with his

* 1 Sam. iii. 18. 2 Sam. xv. 26.

wife or child, in a fit of passion, who entertains good thoughts of them again, when the passion is over; but there is an implacable enmity commenced in the heart against all sin, yea, there is even a hatred of wicked men's persons on account of their sin, which otherwise the soul would love, as he would not hate the devil but for sin. O, how weary am I of this body of death, I know not how to bear it, it is like a loathsome dead carcass, which at once both burdens me with its weight, and poisons me with its stench. It is this, and this alone that makes me send forth daily groans, and lamentations. O that I could put a bill of divorce into the hands of my dearest lust, never to have any connection with it again; I will never be reconciled to sin more; I will cut off my right hand sin, and force the knife of the law into the very heart of my sensuality and worldly-mindedness; I will study their utter extirpation; I am "ashamed and blush to lift up my face to God," because of my spots of guilt and pollution; never did any thing so affect my heart, as my sin against God, "I will declare mine iniquity, and be very sorry for my sin;"* for the future, I will "stand in awe that I may not sin," I will fear sin more than hell; "I cannot bear them that are evil;" though I have patience to bear any affliction, "I behold transgressors, and am grieved," and shed many tears for the dishonour they bring to my God.† O that sin were banished out of the world, or my soul withdrawn from this wicked world.

(2.) As for the liking or kind affections, the renewed soul can truly say, with David, "I have set my affections to the house of my God;" as to inferior objects, "my soul is as a weaned child." New light creates new

* Ps. cxxxix. 21, 22. Rom. vii. 24. Ezra ix. 6. Ps. xxxviii. 18.
† Psal. iv. 4. Rev. ii. 2. Psal. cxix. 136, 158.

love, new desires new delights. Truth in the understanding, darting upon the affections, and made to converge by the glass of meditation, inflames the soul: did not "our hearts burn within us while he opened to us the scriptures?" said the disciples travelling to Emmaus.* The sun in the firmament sheds his influence into the bowels of the earth, and light and heat come together into the soul; knowledge affects the heart; the more the Christian knows God, the more he loves him. The soul risen with Christ, cannot but "set its affections on things above;" for "where the treasure is, there will the heart be also." Oh saith the Christian, how good is God, I love the Lord above every person and thing, "with all my heart, soul, mind, and might;† with my soul have I desired him in the night:" even "as the hart panteth after the water brooks. When shall I come and appear before God?" God, even God alone "is my exceeding joy." I will take pleasure in nothing but God; this, this is both my duty and privilege: I hope I can "call the sabbath a delight:"‡ and he promiseth I shall delight myself in the Lord. My comfort and content is, in communion with God, and it is an anticipation of heavenly joys. I love the word of God, "his testimonies are the rejoicing of my heart, and I have rejoiced in the ways thereof, more than in all riches; and delight myself in the Lord's statutes," Psal. cxix. 14. O how the good soul is elevated, and transported in the galleries of love! its pleasures are infinitely beyond the pleasures of sense.

O then, Christian, feel how the pulse of thy soul beats usually: is thy heart working God-wards in

* 1 Chron. xxix. 3. Psal. cxxxi. 1, 2. Luke xxiv. 32.
† Col. iii. 2. Matt. vi. 21. Psal. xviii. 1. Matt. xxii. 37.
‡ Isa. xxvi. 9. Psal. xlii. 1. xliii. 4. Isa. lviii. 13, 14.

duties of his worship, or in daily converse? which way tends the bent of the soul? Art thou sincerely troubled, that thou canst "not delight thyself in the Lord," as thou oughtest? Wouldst thou give all the world that thou hadst but a heart to love God more? Canst thou say as Peter did, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee?" A flame may be painted, but a painted flame cannot be felt. I find the workings of love kindled in my bosom, if I know any thing of my heart. I have also searched the characters of true love in the scriptures, and I find my heart corresponding thereto, harmonizing therewith; I am further told, that this love is the proper character of the new creature, connatural with, and engraven on the new nature, for "he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."*

Thirdly, I proceed to consider the properties of this new creation; and they are these seven:

1. It is universal. It is not in a part of the soul, but runs through the whole man, "soul, body, and spirit." It is extensive and comprehensive, takes in all internal powers and external members, all acts in all faculties, at all times, and in all employments. As in the law, the whole sacrifice was to be offered to God; so it is not acceptable to God if any part be withheld from him. This new creation "is as leaven that runs through the whole lump,"† and puts a gracious tincture into all the faculties. This is not a limb or member, but a whole new man; yea, the Christian is a perfect man, having all the parts of a saint, though defective in point of degree. Our heavenly Father has no blind, lame, deranged, or maimed children; there are no idiots in his family. A Chris-

* Psal. xxxvii. 4. John xxi. 15—17. 1 John iv. 16.

† 1 Thess. v. 23. Exod. xxix. 18. Rom. xii. 1. Matt. xiii. 33.

tian indeed hath all graces radically; but the hypocrite is mainly defective in something of an essential nature, requisite to constitute a saint; he is a cake half baked, dough on one side; the legs of the lame are not equal.

2. It is vital and self-moving; "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." It is true, it is hid from outward observation, as the spring that moves the visible hand, for "our life is hid with Christ in God:" but a vital principle it is. This gracious habit is to the soul as the soul is to the body; it is a spark of divine life kindled by the holy Spirit; a seed of God,* quickened within the womb of the earth by the influence of heaven, putting forth gracious acts and precious fruits, through excitations of assisting grace, after a nipping winter of temptations or cold autumn of spiritual decays; his Spirit makes us willing. Oh, saith the Christian, I am restless, as a bird out of the nest, or a fish out of its proper element of water, unsatisfied till I return to my God. But the hypocrite resembles a puppet dressed like a saint, moved by art, or a machine put in motion by something external, which the workman affixes to it; such is the hypocrite: as one saith, there is a vast difference betwixt wool on the sheep's back, which clipped, will grow again; and the wool of the sheep's skin on the wolf's back, which grows no more. The living saint still works upwards, the graceless soul is dead, and puts forth no vital acts.

3. It is sensible and susceptible of impressions; it is not a dead, inanimate log, but of a tender, quick sensation, and can easily discern what profits or prejudices it, what helps or hurts it; it groans under what it feels as making against its being or well-being:

* Gal. ii. 20. Col. iii. 3. 1 John iii. 9.

nothing doth it so much injury as sin, or what hath a tendency to it: any act of omission or commission lies heavy upon it, pierces and wounds it, and makes it bleed; hence it is called a heart of flesh, which is a soft and sensible thing. Defects of grace, inroads of temptation, intermissions of duty, or worldliness, are more laid to heart by the new creature, than gross outbreakings of sin in the hypocrite. Whatsoever it perceives to be annoyance or disturbance, is a grievous affliction. Oh, saith the soul, I found at such a time God's withdrawing the assistance of his Spirit; being puzzled, I bungled in a duty, and could make nothing of it: woe is me, what had I done to banish my God? I find a weight on me, "and a sin that easily besets me." Did I not quench, grieve, or resist the Spirit? Was I not sluggish, heartless, or formal? Lord, forgive me that sin, and quicken me with thy grace. The hypocrite hath none of these experiences, soul-exercises, or agonies, but runs on in a heartless formality, and customary performance, knowing nothing of God's access, or his recess, coming or going.

4. It is distinguished by its growth, it is never stationary; the pious man is compared to the sun, "that shineth still brighter to the perfect day;" and to "calves of the stall," that are still growing: as "new-born babes, believers desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby;"* it is their duty, yea, their privilege to "grow stronger and stronger, to perfect holiness in the fear of God;" for the new creature helps, spurs on the child of God to improve his talents, to use God's appointed means for increase, and to derive communications from Jesus Christ, that "he may increase with the increase of God." This new creature has a new appetite, which in this imperfect state,

* Prov. iv. 18. Mal. iv. 2. 1 Pet. ii. 2, 3.

makes him desire and long after more; and he never saith he hath enough in this lower world. It is said of the crocodile, as long as he lives he grows; so it is with the believer. O, saith the soul, I am short, still defective; the greatest part of what I have attained, is the least part of what I want; O that I could be more like God! "be changed into his image from glory to glory."* I can never be enough like God; this is the clearest evidence of the truth of grace; a dead picture will not grow as a living child, a dead stake grows not as a living plant. Lord, make me more humble, holy, heavenly, self-denying, watchful, fruitful.

5. Consciousness of dependance characterizes the new creature, the soul becomes sensible of its own weakness, it feels not its own feet, it cannot stand alone, therefore leans on its beloved, every step through this wilderness state, Cant. viii. 5. Woe be to me, saith the Christian, if I be alone, I have long found by too dear bought experience, that I am like a staff, and can stand no longer than I am upheld by an Almighty hand; if God bid me come upon the fluid waves, and reach out his hand, I will venture, as Peter did, my feet will not fail, if faith fail not; Lord, "hold up my goings in thy path, that my footsteps slip not;" alas, "without thee I can do nothing;" but by thee I can "run through a troop," and by my God, "I can leap over a wall;" I am able "to do all things through Christ that strengthens me."† I find by experience, that the least difficulty overmatcheth me without divine assistance, and the "greatest mountains become a plain before Zerubbabel," my Lord of hosts, who out of weakness can make strong; if he say, "My grace is sufficient for thee," 2 Cor. xii. 9, I will encounter a

* Job xvii. 9. 2 Cor. vii. 1. Col. ii. 19. 2 Cor. iii. 18.
† Psal. xvii. 5. John xv. 5. Psal. xviii. 29. Phil. iv. 13.

Goliah, and in the name of the Lord do wonders; my only strength is thy all-sufficient grace; "by the grace of God I am what I am," 1 Cor. xv. 10.

6. The new creature is watchful; the soul never sleeps. Grace in the soul is still waking: "I sleep, but my heart wakes," Cant. v. 2. The wise virgins as well as the foolish may nod, Matt. xxv. 5, 6; but they are quickly awaked with the Bridegroom's coming. Grace may lie in the unexercised, passive habit, or as a spark of fire in the ashes, but it will revive: there needs not the impartation of a new life, but the stirring up of the vital principle. It may seem a paradox that the Christian is distinguished from his heart: a suspension of the actings of spiritual liveliness and vivacity there may be, whereby the senses are at present bound up by indisposition to duty, yet a principle of grace, inclining to action there may be also: thus there are two different natures in the child of God, like two distinct persons; so Paul saith, Rom. vii. 20, "If I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." Such a distinction he often makes. These different natures have opposite actings; in the worst state of a Christian's spiritual dulness, he is very apprehensive things are not right with him; there are some convictions, challenges, purposes, protestations of the inward man against this indolent frame, it displeases him, and he hath some faint and languid strugglings to raise himself. The new creature gives not full consent, though it can act little vigorously, but there is a "lusting against each other," Gal. v. 17. Peter's faith did not act, yet did not totally fail, when he denied his Master; for Christ's prayer was heard for him, Luke xxii. 32. There is some tendency in the heart God-wards, in the saint's lowest ebbs: he is not satisfied in his sleepiness.

7. The new creation will abide, it will remain and overcome all opposition, and continue as long as the soul continues, as was said before. It is an immortal seed; "the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doth the will of God, abideth for ever," 1 John ii. 17: "This anointing abideth in believers," and causeth them to abide in him, verse 27: this principle will be as "a well of water springing up to everlasting life:" this "fear of the Lord endureth for ever:" his "righteousness endureth for ever." Morality withers and decays, but sincerity will run parallel with the life of God, and line of eternity. If thou art an apostate, thou wast never such a new creature as I have described: "If you continue in my word," said Jesus, "then are you my disciples indeed." * Look you to your sincerity, and God will look to your perseverance; nay, that principle will be attended with a holy jealousy, which is the awe-band of the soul, and a special preservation against apostacy: Jer. xxxii. 40, "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." This fear will teach them to incline God-wards, and abhor what tends to departing from God. Scripture makes this a clear evidence of a state of grace, and interest in Christ: and the contrary, evidence of a soul going off. † Try yourselves by this character: do you persevere?

Objection. How can I evidence myself to be a new creature? I am not yet at the end of my journey, who knows what I may do, or be? I have a backsliding heart, I may fall away before I die.

Answ. It is true, thou canst not presage what may come; but thou mayest form an opinion of time to come from what thou hast met with in times past;

* John iv. 14. Psalm xix. 9. cxii. 3. John viii. 31.

† Col. i. 21—23. Heb. iii. 6—14. 1 John ii. 19.

thou hast had experience of the operations of grace, the witnessings of God's Spirit, healing of backslidings, conquest of some strong lusts, victory over the world, and the vanquishing of Satan's assaults, so that thou canst set up thy "Ebenezer, and say, Hitherto hath the Lord helped," 1 Sam. vii. 12. And dost thou not find it upon record, Phil. i. 6, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it to the day of Jesus Christ?" It is true, you are not absolute conquerors till the last enemy be destroyed, which is death; but Scripture style reckons sincere combatants to be conquerors: "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them," 1 John iv. 4. v. 4. And "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith;" yea, we "are more than conquerors, through him that loved us," Rom. viii. 37. And it is often said, "To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the tree of life," Rev. ii. 7. Mark it, it is not said, to him that hath overcome, but τῷ νικῶντι, to him that is overcoming; dost thou keep thy ground, fight still, though sometimes thou art foiled? dost thou not even gain ground by thy falls, mourn for sin, and grow more watchful? As long as thou art in the field against sin, sin is not on the throne in thy heart; "and if sin have not dominion over you, you are not under the law, but under grace," Rom. vi. 14. This victory may have acceptance with God, though not satisfactory to thyself.

CHAP. XI.

A NEW CREATION EVIDENCED BY ITS EFFECTS, CONSEQUENCES, AND OPERATIONS.

FOURTHLY, The last way of discovering the truth of the new creation in the soul, is by its proper fruits and effects, as "the tree is known by its fruits," and the quality of the spring by the streams which issue from it. I can but name these:

1. The new creation produceth a new tongue, new speech, new expressions. The person that was wont to speak the language of Ashdod, now speaks the language of Canaan: his tongue was wont to swear, lie, curse, and rail at religion, or was engaged in vain jangling, idle tales, and impertinent stories, or at best but about weather, trading, and news: now he changeth his note; "The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment." Why so? "the law of God is in his heart; out of the abundance of the heart, his mouth speaks." What say you, sirs? do you speak as becometh saints, not filthiness, foolish talking, or jesting? Is your "speech always with grace, seasoned with salt?" * not "corrupt communication, but that which is good to the use of edifying? Do you exhort, and "provoke one another to love and good works?" Do you speak reverently of God, his word, and works? Do you "with one mind and one mouth glorify God?" † edify saints, and convince gainsayers? Ribaldry, obscenity, and railing are far from a pious man's mouth: rather you hear giving of thanks, asking and answering serious questions with his tongue, which is his glory.

* Psal. xxxvii. 30, 31. Matt. xii. 34. Eph. v. 3, 4. Col. iv. 6.

† Eph. iv. 29, 31. Heb. x. 24, 25. Rom. xv. 6.

2. New works: not only new expressions, but new actions. The new creation engageth men to a new course of life, to "cast off the works of darkness, and to put on the armour of light, to walk honestly as in the day." What a change doth it make in men's employments; their backs are now where their faces were, and their faces where their backs were. This grace of God "teacheth them to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly;" yea, "to be zealous of good works." They were wont to work hard for the world; now they "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling." * They used to follow sports and stage-plays; now they find other employments, reading, praying, meditating, examining their consciences, and mortifying their passions: they find something else to do now, than to spend their time in idleness, and inventing pastimes, to pass away life: they have many graces to exercise, duties to perform, personal and relative; they have no time to be idle, but must fill up their days with profitable employment, to God's glory and their own good account. O how busy are the children of God, "striving to enter in at the strait gate,"—"taking the kingdom of heaven by violence,"—and giving diligence "to make their calling and election sure;"† and that their Master may not find them idle, but that they may be found of him in peace.

3. A new rule suitable for the new creature. Alas, in time past, the poor sinner "walked according to the course of this world." The old traditions and customs of men were wont to be his canon; he followed the multitude in conformity to the world; but now the rule of the new creature is the star he steers his course

* Rom. xiii. 12—14. Tit. ii. 11, 12, 14. Phil. ii. 12.
† Luke xiii. 24. Matt. xi. 12. 2 Pet. i. 10.

by.* Bring me a warrant from the word in a plain text, or a direct unstrained consequence to ground my obedience upon, or you say nothing. God's will is my rule of obedience, that only binds conscience; and the new creature lies square to every command. The authority of God sways it, because there is something in the soul that suits and is adapted to every precept: if he cannot keep any, yet he "hath respect to all God's commandments." He is, as it were, pliant to every thing God makes his duty; but a hypocrite is like a round globe, which toucheth only in some corner, he omits all, except what his interest or fancy calls him to at that juncture: if he "should even keep all, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." A true Christian is of a catholic spirit, a universalist, like Zacharias and Elizabeth, who "walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." These were indeed righteous; if there be circumcision of heart, there will be circumspection in life. See then you walk circumspectly, ἀκριβῶς,† according to command, and to the height of every command, balk none, abate nothing of what God makes duty.

4. A new end, or design. Alas, self is the end and great idol of a carnal heart, till grace rectify and regulate it; all "seek their own," Phil. ii. 21. Matt. vi. 2, self-ease, pleasure, self-profit, self-honour, or applause. The water will rise no higher than the spring: new grace changeth the bias of the soul, as a ship sailing westward, when there comes a strong gale of wind, and carries it directly to the east. Self-seeking is so natural, that till grace alter the constitution of the soul, the sinner will never be beaten off; self-denial is the

* Eph. ii. 2. 1 Pet. i. 18. Rom. xii. 2. Gal. vi. 16.

† Psal. cxix. 6. James ii. 10. Luke i. 6. Eph. v. 15.

first and last lesson our Lord teacheth his disciples, Matt. xvi. 24; this is the first step and highest round in Jacob's ladder; hath thy soul so far learned it, as to make God's glory, and communion with him, the chief aim of thy duties, studies, endeavours? canst thou, soul, throw thyself in the dust, that God may be on the throne? disappear, that God may only be seen, as John Baptist said, "He must increase, but I must decrease," John iii. 30; if any good be done, "it is not I, but the grace of God with me," 1 Cor. xv. 10; let him alone have the glory; let the crown be set no where but on Christ's head, it becomes him best; I will cast down my crown before the throne, and say, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power." As all the lines tend to the centre, so shall all my actions tend only to thy glory; "Let God in all things be glorified," though I be vilified. This rent will I daily pay as a tribute to the crown of heaven; I am resolved to glorify God in my body and soul, which are his;* better lose my life, than lose the end of my life, God's glory.

5. New worship is always a companion of the new creature. It is true, the carnal man might hear and read the word, pray, receive the sacrament, and perform the external acts of religion before, but formally, heartlessly, hypocritically, God knows; "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof," 2 Tim. iii. 5. But as soon as the grace of God hath formed the new creature in the heart, then it is said, as of Paul, "Behold he prayeth," Acts ix. 11; why, did not Paul pray before? Yes, doubtless, he was a Pharisee, and Pharisees made long prayers, it is likely he had a great gift of prayer; aye, but now Paul had the grace of prayer, behold he prays, now he prays with a witness; his prayer hath all the requisites

* Cant. iii. 11. Rev. iv. 10, 11. 1 Pet. iv. 11. 1 Cor. vi. 20.

essential to prayer. Oh now, if you could lay your ear to the closet of this new born saint; what sighs and groans would you hear! Rom. viii. 26. What throbs and tears; what self-loathing confessions; what heart-rending complaints; what heaven-piercing expostulations, would you witness! What believing, pleading of promises; what improvement of Christ's mediatorship! this is not formal or heartless canting. As soon as ever this new creature was formed, the soul was turned from idols, "to serve the living and true God;" that is, "in spirit and in truth." If the words be the same, the workings of heart are as different as a living man's tone from dead organ pipes; the one hath breath, the other not. The gracious soul engageth his heart to approach unto God: yea, he also saith, "let us lift up our hearts with our hands;"* that is, let us pray and use our utmost endeavour to obtain what we pray for.† The hypocrite's tongue may be employed; but the new creature sets the heart a breathing, the hands on working, the feet on walking. Oh how he is concerned in the performance of duty!

6. A new war is commenced by the new creature. As soon as this new creature becomes visible, Satan musters all the powers of darkness against it; and now begins this holy war, which never ceases while the soul is in the body: and oh, how many a sharp skirmish hath the Christian with Satan and his armed bands! The carnal heart holds correspondence with the enemy, and the devil lets the sinner alone, and all his goods or soul's faculties are in peace; he sleeps quietly in the devil's tents, little dreaming whither he is going: or rather he is carried in a golden dream into Satan's territories; or as Solomon's young gal-

* 1 Thess. i. 9. John iv. 24. Jer. xxx. 21. Lamen. iii. 41.

† Oremus et laboremus.

lant with the harlot, "As an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks." But the converted soul sees his danger, and struggles hard to extricate himself, and when he is at liberty, the devil pursues him with rage sometimes, other whiles with subtlety he seeks to overreach him; he is aware of both and is not ignorant of his devices.* One while he fights with spiritual weapons, and so resists the devil, and he flees: another while the soul retires to his strong hold, by faith and prayer, and is secured. Thus the gracious soul is "warring a good warfare, fighting the fight of faith," which is a good fight; he gets disentangled from the affairs of this life, and lays aside every weight, that he may militate more strenuously and more successfully: nor doth the good soul so fight as one that beats the air,† laying about him at adventures; but he spies his enemies, takes a view of them in scripture light, lets fly at the faces of foreign and intestine adversaries, with spiritual, scriptural weapons, and never sounds a parley or makes a truce, but disputes every inch of his passage to heaven: thus this new creature is a christian champion.

7. The new creature finds out new company. Alas, his old companions grow tiresome with the convert, he cannot take delight in his former comrades, who would jest and be merry, and seek to drive him out of his melancholy humours (as they consider them) with pleasant stories, this is but as singing songs to a heavy heart; he is now sick of such vain company, and bids them begone, they are of no use to him. It is very observable, three times, upon such occasions, doth David require all wicked men to depart from him, Psal. vi. 8, "Depart from me, all ye workers of

* Luke xi. 21. Prov. vii. 22. 2 Cor. ii. 11.
† 1 Tim. i. 18, vi. 12. 2 Tim. ii. 4. 1 Cor. ix. 26.

iniquity, for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping;" as if he had said, I have got better company and comfort than you are. Psal. cxix. 115, "Depart from me, ye evil doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God;" as if he had said, I have taken up other resolutions, and must have other companions than you: the last is Psal. cxxxix. 19, "Surely thou shalt slay the wicked, O God; depart therefore from me, ye bloody men;" as if he had said, I am loth to fare as you fare, and will not be found in your company. This is christian policy as well as piety: it is impossible the new creature should take delight in his old companions; "for what communion hath light with darkness? what concord hath Christ with Belial?" There are in the world, persons more suitable to his temper, even saints, not in heaven, but that are on the earth, "men excellent in whom is all his delight." These, these are his companions,* the delight of his soul, he loves them dearly, because they are so like his father in heaven; these are they, he hopes to live with in the other world, and he must associate with them in this, he loves to discourse with them, join in prayer with them, no such content he hath on earth as in the communion of saints.

8. The new creature needs and requires new cordials, new food and physic; the world and all that it can afford, which were wont to be so pleasant, are all but dry meat, have no more "savour than the white of an egg;" the soul hath now a more delicate taste, than to be satisfied with such husks and trash; he sues for the tender mercies of God, Psal. cxix. 77, "Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live," as if he had said, I know not how to live a natural life, and I cannot live a spiritual life without these tender mercies;

* 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15, 17. Psalm xvi. 3. cxix. 63.

the Lord knoweth my delicate appetite, "and crowns me with loving-kindness and tender mercies," Psal. ciii. 4. Luther called the whole Turkish empire but a crumb cast to dogs, and often protested to God, that he would not be put off with these low things, even when he had a silver mine offered him; even a heathen Seneca could say, I am greater, and born to higher things, than terrene objects;* and will not a Christian much more say so? The Christian hath meat to eat that men know not of; spiritual manna, angel's food, is the Christian's diet, "the fatness of God's house; yea, marrow and fatness:" God's word, which is as "honey and honey comb;" better "than necessary food; yea, Jesus Christ himself, "the bread of life."† The new creature finds full contentment in Christ, through a promise. It is worth observing, that spiritual delights are suited to all the spiritual senses, music in the ear, wine to the taste; yea, "his love is better than wine, as ointment poured forth to the smell;" yea, as spikenard and myrrh;‡ his embraces to the touch and feeling, "his left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me;" as for the sight, "my beloved is white and ruddy," Cant. v. 10—16, "he is altogether lovely," and of proportion. You see the new creature hath its senses as well as the body, and spiritual good things gratify them, who by reason "of use, have their senses exercised to discern good and evil," Heb. v. 14.

9. The new creature hath a new home: our being upon earth in these houses of clay, is our short home; our being under the earth, in the grave, is our long home; hell is the sinner's last and everlasting home;

* Major sum et ad majora natus.

† John iv. 32. Psal. xxxvi. 8. lxiii. 5. xix. 10. John vi. 55.

‡ Cant. v. 16. i. 2, 3. ii. 6, 8, 9.

heaven is the saint's best eternal home: "Knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord—but we are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."* A poor graceless wretch is well where he is, like that impious cardinal that would not change his part in Paris for his part in paradise: such as "these are men of the world, whose portion is in this life; these are written in the earth," possibly as recorded and renowned among the great ones of it. But there is a generation of the sons of men, that are not of this world, "whose names are written in heaven; and are travelling towards the new Jerusalem, thence they came, and thither they are bound; "Jerusalem which is above, is free, which is the mother of us all;"† it is thither the new creature tendeth, there it would gladly be: it is troubled at whatsoever stops it in its motion homewards; Rom. viii. 23, "Not only they," that is, the other creatures, "but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of our body;" O blessed jubilee! when shall the dawning of that glorious day appear? "how long must I dwell in Meshech, or in the tents of Kedar?" how long shall I abide on this side Jordan? O that once at last I might inhabit that goodly mount and Lebanon! Why is his chariot so long in coming? why stay the wheels of his chariot? Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, break down the walls of this earthly tabernacle, and "clothe me with that house from heaven." How long shall I be tost on this tumultuous sea? when shall I reach the haven? I long to be with Christ,‡ among "the spirits

* Job iv. 19. Eccl. xii. 5, 7. Rom. vi. 23. 2 Cor. v. 6, 8.
† Psal. xvii. 14. Jer. xvii. 13. Luke x. 20. Gal. iv. 26.
‡ Psal. cxx. 5. 2 Cor. v. 1, 2. Phil. i. 23.

of just men made perfect;" here I am a stranger and pilgrim, and am seeking another country, thither I am hasting; there I would be, that this disguise may be plucked off, that "when he shall appear, I may be like him, and see him as he is:" my best life is yet hid, but when "Christ who is my life, shall appear, then shall I also appear with him in glory;"* for this I hope and wait, and pray and long.

10. The new creature obtains new apprehensions of himself in all this; he was darkness, but "now he is light in the Lord," Eph. v. 8. The poor old creature thinks well of himself, and his doings; he imagines he can pray, and perform duty, and when he hath by the strength of his gifts come off finely, then he applauds himself, as Bernard said of himself,† well done, now God is indebted to thee, and owes thee a kindness; so said the hypocritical Jews, Isa. lviii. 3; and the Pharisees, Luke xviii. 11. But this new creation will teach its possessor another lesson, "when he has done all," alas, "he is an unprofitable servant." My "righteousnesses are but as filthy rags:" still I am an unclean thing: I deserve nothing but wrath, if I "justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me." My spiritual duties need spiritualizing; my repentance needs repenting of; my exercise of grace needs a gracious pardon; my Lord Jesus must take away the iniquity of my holy things, perfume my poor services, and offer my "prayers with his much incense, upon the golden altar, before the throne."‡ I dare not stand before God in my best suit of inherent righteousness. If "thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity; O Lord, who can stand?" "In thy sight shall no

* Heb. xii. 23. xi. 13—16. 1 John iii. 1, 2. Col. iii. 3, 4.

† Bene fecisti, Bernarde. ‡ Luke xvii. 10. Isa. lxiv. 6. Job ix. 20. Exod. xxviii. 38. Rev. viii. 3.

man living be justified." If I look at the new creature, there are many defects therein: if I reflect on the purest actings of grace, alas, they are imperfect. I must "be found in Christ," or I am lost for ever; "not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is by the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." O my Lord, when I am standing before the angel of the Lord, "Satan stands at my right hand to resist me;" and justly he may, "for I am clothed with filthy garments." Oh speak the word, that "mine iniquity may pass away from me," and "clothe me with change of raiment."* My change of principles will not do without an upper garment to cover all my defects and faults, in which I must stand as righteous before God at the great day. The sum of all this is contained in that excellent text, with which I conclude this head. Phil. iii. 3, "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

CHAP. XII.

DIRECTIONS RELATIVE TO THE USE OF MEANS.

I AM sensible I have insisted too long upon the first division in reference to instruction, concerning the evidences of this change in our souls, from its preparatives, parts, properties and effects, I shall be the briefer on the rest.

II. The next is to give some instructions to those

* Psal. cxxx. 3. cxliii. 2. Phil. iii. 9. Zech. iii. 1—4.

that feel or fear they are not yet new creatures, how they are to conduct themselves, and what course they are to take that they may become new creatures.

I am much anticipated in this by the worthy labours of those excellent men, Mr. Baxter, Mr. Joseph Allein, and many others in their directions about conversion, which are coincident with my design; to which I refer the reader.

Yet this must not be understood, as though it were in any man's power to change his own heart, any more than he can create himself, or put life into a dead carcass, but it becomes men—not to hinder or obstruct the strivings of the Spirit that may work this grace—and to improve their natural faculties to the utmost, in order to the attainment of this end. I shall but briefly lay before you what a natural man can do, by the help of common providence, and what he must do, as he will answer for the contrary another day, to that God that hath given him a command, and rational faculties capable of compliance.

1. Own and improve natural principles, such are κοιναὶ ἔννοιαι, innate notions, common to man, as a being endowed with reason; namely, that there is a God, that this God must needs be an excellent Being, the ultimate end of all things, the chief good, that all things depend upon him, and must bow to him; that this God must be worshipped, that his will is the rule of man's obedience; that there is moral good and evil, and that there will be a retribution in this or in another world. Natural conscience even of heathens discovers something of these grand principles; for saith the blessed apostle, Rom. ii. 14, 15, "Though the Gentiles have not the written law before their eyes," yet they have a transcript thereof in their hearts, which declares to them some good and evil, and con-

science accordingly excuseth them if they do well, and "accuseth them if they do evil," Rom. i. 18—24. The imprisoning of these truths in unrighteousness, produced a judicial hardening, and giving them up to uncleanness, and rendered them without excuse: and can we think that men now disclaiming and obliterating these notices of religion will fare better? Surely not. So on the contrary, the way to obtain more, is to improve what we have. I say not, that God is bound to give special grace to such as improve what is common, but an instance can hardly be produced to the contrary; and this is God's method in vouchsafing his grace, to engage men to cherish and excite moral principles by diligent endeavours, which he usually seconds with his blessing; yea, this course doth naturally tend to weaken vicious inclinations. Set yourselves about this work, and you little know what it may come to at last. O that unconverted sinners had but the integrity of king Abimelech, Gen. xx. 6, to act according to the light which they have, and the restraining grace afforded them, which the Lord calls integrity, which is however only of a moral nature, yet good, so far as it goes, and a means of more.

2. Be jealous, lest you be mistaken in this point, lest you misapprehend the nature of the new creature, or lest your own hearts deceive you, for they are "deceitful and desperately wicked," Jer. xvii. 9. And Satan may attempt to substitute some production of his own in the room of this new creation. Counterfeit grace may look like saving grace: reformation looks like regeneration. How often is a Bristol stone taken for a pearl? Painted grapes once cheated living birds. You must first get a scriptural definition of this new creature; "To the law and to the testimony,"

Isa. viii. 20. Judge yourselves by that word which must judge you at the last day, Rom. ii. 16. Be afraid of self-deceit; "blessed is he that feareth always." You live in the midst of deceptions, a deceitful heart, allurements of pleasure, an ensnaring world, and a tempting devil, all set against you, and we are apt to believe that to be true, we would have to be so: but put the case to thyself; What if I be mistaken? I read of some that "think themselves something, when they are nothing." Others put a false estimate upon themselves, "deceiving their own selves." What if this be my case? What if I be in a delusive dream, imagining I am bound for heaven, when I am descending into the pit? What if I be found without the oil of grace in the vessel of my heart; a foolish virgin amongst the wise?* What if I prove the only guest at the gospel feast, without a wedding garment, and be struck speechless? Oh what an overwhelming disappointment will it be! Hath none proved such? Why may not I? Some have gone off the stage with "a lie in their right hand," and have lain down in sorrow, notwithstanding the sparks of their own kindling. O what need have I to fear, lest "a promise being left of entering into rest, I should finally come short of it!"†

3. Deal faithfully with your own souls, in self-examination. Flatter not yourselves, examine not only your actions, but the internal state of your souls, how your principles are formed; you may do it, for God hath given you a self-reflecting faculty, "The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, that searcheth the inward parts of the belly." You must do it, you are commanded "to commune with your own heart, to

* Gal. vi. 3. James i. 22. Matt. xxv. 1—10.

† Matt. xxii. 12, 13. Isa. xliv. 20. l. 11. Heb. iv. 1.

examine yourselves," prove your work, God's servants have made diligent search:* and will you continue strangers to your own hearts? will you be such unkind neighbours, as never to ask your hearts how they do? or will you be put off with a frivolous or dilatory answer? O, sirs, come to a point, drive yourselves to this dilemma, I am either a new creature or not, a child of God, or of the devil; I am bound either for heaven or hell; I had not need to remain in suspense about this weighty case; I will now put this doubt out of doubt; I cannot rest satisfied with uncertainties in so important a concern; God forbid I should weigh it light, or be mistaken; I must not take preparatives for parts of the new creature; the porch for the house; I will try and try again, and prove my evidences by scripture rule, and appeal to God for the sincerity of my heart; "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me, and try my reins and my heart," Psal. xxvi. 2. I must be a new man, or no man in Christ; I will not be put off with morality or uncertainty; irresolvedness breeds disquietude; I am determined to come to some conclusion.

4. Attend diligently on the most powerful ministry. Not such a dull, formal, heartless preaching, as will rock you asleep in security, or "sew pillows to your arm-holes;" preaching pleasing things, promising life in a sinful state, and crying, peace, peace, when God proclaims war against you; thousands are undone by flatteries. Oh frequent a rousing, convincing ministry, which is the "power of God to salvation." The word is the proper medium of communicating divine grace; by which Christ is formed in the heart,† the glass in which you may behold a true representation of your-

* Prov. xx. 27. Psal. iv. 4. 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Gal. vi. 4. Psal. lxxvii. 6.
† Ezek. xiii. 17—22. Rom. i. 16. Gal. iv. 19.

selves; by which you may be "changed into his image,"—"beholding the glory of the Lord" therein. "I have begotten you," saith Paul, "through the gospel." This is God's workhouse, where he shapes and forms this new creature; of how many an ordinance may it be said this and that man was born there.* O therefore, be constantly waiting at the posts of wisdom, hear the most warm, lively preachers, prepare for hearing, set yourselves as in the presence of God. Say thus with thyself, I am going to hear the word of the living God, "which is the ministration of the Spirit," apt and able to give life to dead souls. It is not so much the word of men, but of God. O that it may work effectually in my soul! It is not man, but God, who is now treating with me; "God himself is now beseeching me," and the minister "praying me in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God.†" I perceive it rests with me, God hath declared himself reconciled, if my depraved heart were at last prevailed with to be reconciled to him. O that this may be the day when, and this the sermon whereby, thou wilt mould and form my soul for thyself: now, Lord, let thy words be spirit and life to me: O for renewing grace!

5. Let convictions by the word have their due effect. Strike while the iron is hot, let not impressions die or wear off, postponement lost both Felix and Agrippa their souls, stifled convictions leave the heart harder, heated water, cooled again, is sooner frozen: who knows how long the Spirit may strive? When God is working, work then, put not off warnings; when God convinceth thee of the evil of a sin, presently discard it; when of a duty, without delay commence the

* James i. 25. 2 Cor. iii. 18. 1 Cor. iv. 15. Psal. lxxxvii. 5.
† 2 Cor. iii. 8. 1 Thess. ii. 13. 2 Cor. v. 20.

practice of it; when a wound is made, take heed lest the air get in and it begin to fester, and at last grow incurable: our "Lord is standing at the door, and knocking." He will not always wait thy leisure; the Spirit will not always strive with thee. You must sail when the wind blows. There are (*candida tempora*) proper seasons for every thing. It is a dangerous thing for "a man not to know his time."* If you miss the opportunity, it may never return; the market lasts not all the year. If the tide have brought you thus far, go with it, it may never return to fetch you off: "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation," not to-morrow. O quench not the Spirit. Think thus, I have stood out many a day of grace, lost many a golden season, it is infinite mercy that God is still calling; if I lose this, I may never have more; yea, I may be in hell before another sermon, even before morning. O that I could "know the day of my visitation!"† O that now at last, my soul were effectually changed!

6. Get thy heart affected with thy sin and misery, by nature and practice; look on thyself as dead in trespasses and sins, and thus incapable of quickening thyself. Let your language be, alas, my praying, reading, hearing, reforming, will never attain the end; I am sunk far below the possibility of human or angelic help; means must be used, but means must not be rested in, they cannot effect the purpose; nay, alas, "I am without strength," and can do nothing; "in me, that is, in my flesh dwells no good thing;" I am a miserable leper, full of "wounds, bruises, putrefying sores;" woe is me, I am defiled in Adam, and actually

* Acts xxiv. 25—27. Rev. iii. 20. Gen. vi. 3. Eccles. ix. 12.
† 2 Cor. vi. 2. 1 Thess. v. 19. Luke xix. 9.

polluted; averse to all good, and prone to all evil; "I am in the gall of bitterness, and bonds of iniquity."* Satan is leading me hell-wards, I must be changed or perish; for aught I know I stand tottering on the brink of eternal misery; I hang by the slender thread of my natural life over everlasting burnings; my case is worse than the brutes, that are not capable of moral evil. I am already condemned, and liable to the execution of the righteous sentence, "having a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation;" another step may set me past hope, for any thing that I know, "this night may devils require my soul,"† and hurry it into the infernal lake. O what will become of me! whither am I going? Lord, awake my sleepy conscience, to see my danger, that I may haste out of the Sodom of fire and brimstone to the mountain; God forbid, I should stay another day in my unregenerate state.

7. Learn to know and exercise faith on Jesus Christ: the life of holiness as well as righteousness is in him; "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." There is no spiritual life, but what is derived from Christ, who saith, "Because I live, you shall live also." Sinners are dead; the nearer they come to Christ, the more hope of life; as the nearer to the sun, the more light; we only come to have the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Nothing doth so transform a sinner, as looking on God through Christ; the woman that did but touch the hem of Christ's garment, derived virtue from him; none are branches of this vine, but they have life and fruitfulness:‡ all that

* Rom. v. 6. vii. 18. Isa. i. 6. Acts viii. 23.

† Eccles. iii. 21. Heb. x. 27. Luke xii. 20.

‡ Gal. ii. 20. John xiv. 19. 2 Cor. iv. 6. John xv. 5.

are "grafted in the olive, partake of the root and fatness of that olive tree." Labour after faith and love; faith unites the soul to Christ, for "he dwells in our hearts by faith." Love assimilates the soul to God, and the more we are like God, the more of meetness we have for heaven. Faith is the spiritual ligament which binds the soul to Christ. Love is a voluntary mover of the soul to Christ; faith is the receiver, love the worker; "faith worketh by love;"* and both are absolutely necessary to the new creature. Christ is the image of God, and the new creature is the image of Christ, and so of God. Love sees all good in the enjoyment of God, and in conformity to him as the means to attain that end. Faith unites the soul to God mystically, love morally; there can be no new creation without both these; therefore to believe in God, and to love God, are the only means to be like God, and therein consists the new creature; therefore study these.

8. Rest not till you be divorced from sin and sinners. You may and "must amend your ways," Jer. vii. 3; if you cannot mend your hearts, "Cease to do evil, learn to do well; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and return to the Lord;" be no more slaves to your sensual appetites, which are as cords to hold you in the devil's service, and drag you down hell-wards. This day, bid an everlasting farewell to sin, say to every idol, "Get thee hence; what have I any more to do with idols."† If you cannot cut up sin by the roots, yet be sure to lop off its branches; it is true, this is not enough, but this is something, and who knows what may be its tendency, and termination? "Departing from iniquity," is one

* Rom. xi. 17. Eph. iii. 17. Gal. v. 6.

† Isa. i. 16. lv. 7. Prov. v. 22. Isa. xxx. 22. Hos. xiv. 8.

part of the new creature; you cannot find "mercy, except you forsake as well as confess sin;" spare but one sin, and God will not spare thee; "turn from all sins, and you shall live." If you fall out with sin, there are some hopes; and then away with sinners, "forsake the foolish and live;* but "a companion of fools shall be destroyed," Prov. xiii. 20. There is no hopes of that man who delights in vain company; how many have been laughed out of their serious purposes, or allured from hopeful beginnings by loose associates; if ever God begin this new work in you, this will be the first evidence of it; and it is even a singular help to it, to change your companions, and to run from the tents of the wicked into the society of the godly; I recommend this in a special manner to all persons, young and old, and desire you to read and study, Prov. i. 10—18. ii. 12, 20. iv. 14, 18. 2 Cor. vi. 17. Be sure you join with christian society, open your cases to them; beg their counsel and prayers; company is assimilating, sin is infectious, holiness imitable. Let communion of saints be in your practice as well as in your creed. New society, is a sign and means of new hearts; I despair of your being new creatures in old company.

9. Enter into a solemn covenant with the Lord, by taking God as your chief good, and by making a deed of gift of yourselves entirely to the Lord. I shall not much need to enlarge upon this, having treated on it fully elsewhere, only as it is subservient to this design. Enter into an oath, "and swear the Lord liveth," Jer. iv. 2; Deut. xxvi. 17, "and avouch him to be yours." Do this understandingly, solemnly, resolutely, deliberately; set some time apart, place God before thine eyes, make him witness of the singleness of thy heart, that thou

* 2 Tim. ii. 19. Prov. xxviii. 13. Ezek. xviii. 21. Prov. ix. 6.

takest God the Father, to love him, trust in him, depend on him, and resign all to him: God the Son, as prophet, priest, king, to be led by him, justified, and ruled by his laws: God the Holy Ghost, to be enlightened, to be sanctified, and comforted by him; and when thou hast thus taken God for thy God, and devoted thyself to him, soul and body, thou mayest expect and hope that the Lord will dwell in thee, as in his temple, his house, cleanse thee from impurity, adorn thee with graces, and qualify thee for his service, that the persons of the sacred Trinity will take up their lodging and residence in thy soul, that you may henceforth be an "habitation of God through the Spirit." Such is the new creation; and the way to attain it, is "to give up yourselves to the Lord;" to be ordered according to his pleasure, for his glory, that he may be "glorified both in soul and body which are his."* If thou voluntarily subscribest to the equity of his articles, taking him with all the sufferings attending the ways of religion, and yieldest up thy whole interests to his disposal, hating the sins that he forbids, practising the duties that he commands, walking in all the ways of his appointment, in his worship and ordinances; this, this is a coming up to the terms of the covenant of grace, and then thou shalt have the graces and privileges of that covenant, which comprehends this new creation.

10. Down on thy knees, and beg this renewal of thy nature at the hands of God; say as David did, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me," Psal. li. 10. Say, Lord, I am quite ruined in the old Adam, and I cannot help myself, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" not one; but thou hast promised in the gospel, to

* Eph. ii. 20—22. 2 Cor. viii. 5. 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

" make all things new," and in the new covenant thou promisest "a new heart," Ezek. xxxvi. 26. This is the great mercy, O Lord, I want, and wait for, and I ask thee nothing but what I have under thine own hand in the promise; O that I were partaker of it! yea, thou hast promised " to give thy holy Spirit to them that ask it," Luke xi. 13. Now thy Spirit can sanctify hearts, as lightning cleanseth the air, as fire refines metals. Lord, seal my soul with the Holy Spirit of promise; put on me thine own stamp, as the seal leaves its impress on the wax. Lord, I shall never be acceptable to thee, profitable to men, or comfortable to myself, except I be renewed and become a new creature, I cannot without this live to any purpose, and I cannot die with any comfort.

Obj. But God heareth not sinners, their prayers are abomination.

Answ. If you be resolved to go on in a course of sinning, or pray to gratify a sensual appetite, as a thief for a prize, you and your prayers are abominable; but if you be repenting, returning sinners, and pray for grace and pardon, God will pity you, and who knows but he may meet you in mercy, as he did the returning prodigal? Luke xv. 20; " Repent then, and pray God, if perhaps the thoughts of thy heart may be forgiven thee," Acts viii. 22. Thou art undone, if thou give over praying; many have sped well at his door, and so mayest thou; still ask, seek, and knock.

CHAP. XIII.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THOSE WHO ARE INDEED NEW CREATURES.

A THIRD class of directions may be given to sincere Christians (who find, on good evidence, that this change is wrought in them,) how they should live, walk, and conduct themselves in the world, both towards God and man.

1. Use God's appointed means for ascertaining the reality of this new creation. It is one thing to be, another thing to know that we are, new creatures. Alas, some sincere souls walk at uncertainties. A letter may be written, saith one, though it be not sealed: so grace may be written in the soul, though the Spirit hath not set to his seal; partly to keep the soul humble, partly to punish some sin. But I must not handle the common place of assurance, the possibility, the hindrances, helps, advantages, nature or kinds of assurance, but drop a word by the way. Are the figures of grace engraven upon the dial of your hearts? pray and wait for the Sun of Righteousness to shine on it, that you may better see what time of day it is in your hearts; yet, if you grope in the dark, you may feel some characters engraven: "give diligence to make first your calling, then your election sure." Your happiness consists in being, and your comfort in knowing, that you are new creatures; "and we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope to the end." One text calls for "a full assurance of faith in drawing nigh to God." Another speaks of "assurance of understanding;" even full assurance, yea, "riches of

full assurance."* Then indeed thy heart will be comforted to purpose. O labour after much grace, much comfort, for "the joy of the Lord is your strength," Neh. viii. 10, and will cheer up your hearts in every condition and affliction. O brethren, content not yourselves to live at uncertainties, or under doubts, but use all means to attain to the highest pitch of assurance that is attainable in this world.

2. Thank God for the rich mercy displayed in the renovation of your souls. Will you bless God for the good creatures that nourish your bodies? and will you not adore him for this new, and more excellent provision for your inward man? Say as the blessed apostle, 1 Pet. i. 3, "Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Next to Christ's blessed undertakings for you, it is the greatest mercy God has vouchsafed to you, to form Christ in your souls. Alas, what were you better than the rest of the corrupt mass of mankind, that lay in the impurities of sin? What merit was there in you, that you should be raised up to sit with princes, even with the princes of his people, to be made like angels? Surely you that are such patterns of mercy, must be trumpets of God's praise; you that were loathsome carcasses, incarnate devils, to be made by this new creation "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; what is this for, but that you should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light?" 1 Pet. ii. 9. O admire free grace, and say with David, "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house that thou hast brought me hitherto?" 2 Sam. vii. 18. How

* 2 Pet. i. 10. Heb. vi. 11. x. 22. Col. ii. 2.

many millions of pretending Christians know nothing of this great work, experimentally? this is as life from the dead, infinitely better than natural life, and all the comforts thereof.

3. Beware of declension or apostasy. The new creature is but a creature, it may fail, yea, it will fail, if not supported by an Almighty hand, and if God be provoked, he may justly withdraw, and leave us to ourselves; then we fall as a staff unsupported by the hand. It is true, the covenant secures real saints from falling finally, but imperfect grace leaves them exposed to fall foully, as David, Peter. Be jealous of thyself, "Blessed is he that feareth always." Be not secure, security exposeth to Satan's temptations. Sleep levels all, the wise man is no wiser than a fool to devise his own safety, or the strong man better than the weak to defend himself. The best of saints in spiritual slumber, becomes as Samson, only like another man; "watch that you enter not into temptation." It is worth watching to keep the house from robbing; sleeping one night, may keep thee waking many nights in sorrow, as it did David. The unwatchful Christian oft looseth God's presence, as Christ withdrew from the sleepy spouse. A drowsy soul is not capable of improving Christ or grace: put the sweetest wine into a sleepy man's hand, it will be spilt. And if at any time you begin to nod, rouse up yourselves, gird on your armour, rally your routed forces; "remember whence you are fallen, repent, and do your first works."* Awake out of your lethargy, lest it end in apostasy: when thou hast fallen, shew that a change has taken place in thee by a rebound upwards, in renewed purposes against sin; recover thy spiritual strength, activity, and familiarity with God; be rest-

* Prov. xxviii. 14. Matt. xxvi. 41. Cant. v. 2, 6. Rev. ii. 5.

less till matters be set right again; like a bird from its nest, a stone from its centre, or as undigested meat on a sick stomach, having no ease till sin be rejected by a vomit of repentance, and renewed acts of faith. "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward," 2 John, 8.

4. Seek earnestly the growth of the new creature. Be not content with the habit; if you say you have enough, you have no grace; your business is to "perfect holiness in the fear of God;" to grow in grace, that "you may be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Dead things grow not; children grow, and are fed by what first nourished them, as "new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby." * Be often using the means of nourishment, and you will grow up to further maturity. There is, saith one, much scurf on the face of this new-born babe of grace, which by degrees will wear off as it grows up, and so it becomes distinguishable. Growth helps to see its truth: blow up this spark into a flame, and it will be visible. A hypocrite grows not any more than the hands, arms, legs of a pictured child on the wall, let it be there ever so long. Oh, strive to grow every day better, "to go from strength to strength," Psal. lxxxiv. 7, reaching after perfection in grace; to "run the race set before you;" to get daily more power against corruption. He is a careful and skilful physician that removes the disease, and corroborates or strengthens the body; you must do both. The old man and new creature, are like weights in balances, as the one ascends, the other descends; as the earth and sea, where the one looseth, the other gaineth. Oh, be still on the gaining hand,

* 2 Cor. vii. 1. 2 Pet. iii. 18. 2 Tim. ii. 1. 1 Pet. ii. 2.

improve all mercies, afflictions, ordinances, and providences, for nourishing this new creature in your souls: when you are grown most, you will still be defective, something "will still be lacking in your faith," love, or humility, 1 Thess. iii. 10. You know but in part, you are not yet ripe.

5. Live up to this change, live at the rate of persons so principled, "walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory, worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called;"—"only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel." *Only* is here a most comprehensive word: you must act above the style of carnal men, soberly, righteously, and godly.* If you be singled out to be new creatures, "what singular thing do you?" Matt. v. 47. What do you more than others? Remember, sirs, you are new creatures; an old heart would have served well enough to have done the devil's drudgery withal; you are new born to higher employment, now you "must serve not in the oldness of the letter, but in newness of spirit," Rom. vii. 6. When the temple was built with such assiduous care, and costly materials, surely it was for holy use; sincere Christians are God's "workmanship created in Christ Jesus to good works," Eph. ii. 10. Now it becomes you to act as you are; yours would be aggravated sin, if you sin, who have such a glorious work of the Spirit on your hearts, as none in the world have besides you: you are consecrated persons, and by your sin you profane God's temple. Others' sins are theft, yours sacrilege, because you rob God of what was devoted to him. When God breathed such a noble soul into man's body, he designed him for higher acts than those of mere sense, as brutes. So, Christian, thou art of a higher ex-

* 1 Thess. ii. 12. Eph. iv. 1. Phil. i. 27. Tit. ii. 12.

traction, than to walk as men, as carnal men, 1 Cor. iii. 3; no, friend, as thou "hast received Christ, so thou must walk in him," Col. ii. 6. O take heed of sin, it is contrary to the divine nature which God hath planted in thee; now we know the more unnatural any act is, the more horrid; as for a woman to kill her own child, or a man to be cruel to his own flesh. Oh beware of killing the babe of grace in thy soul, by sin; but live up to thy principles and privileges.

6. Attend upon God in all his institutions, and in all aim at closer communion with him, in all duties and ordinances, as in hearing the word, prayer, seals of the covenant, christian conference, and communion of saints; this is the air in which the Christian breathes, the most wholesome for this new creature; "Lord," saith the Psalmist, "I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwells;" and he often cries out for the living God; "O when," saith he, "shall I come and appear before God?" Nothing lay nearer David's heart, than God's presence in his ordinances.* It is or should be so with the new creature; but O wait for the Spirit's wafting over thy soul to Jesus; rest not in ordinances, they are but the boat or bridge to carry thy soul over to God; the ordinance is lost, and thy labour is in vain, if thou do not enjoy God in ordinances. O labour to see Christ "walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks;" be sure you "hold him in the galleries." Ordinances are "the golden pipes that empty the golden oil out of themselves;" be sure that "of his fulness you receive, and grace for grace."† The Holy Ghost sits in ordinances as a minister of state in his office, ready to distribute to every one's case as there is need: thou art at the

* Psalm xxvi. 8. xlii. 1. lxiii. 1, 2. lxxxiv. 1, 2.

† Rev. ii. 1. Cant. vii. 5. Zech. iv. 12. John i. 16.

right door, wait his leisure, and it shall not be in vain.

7. Endeavour to propagate religion, do what thou canst to make others new creatures, thy relations, neighbours, and all thou art acquainted with; this is the duty, yea, the character of the new creature by prayer, advice, example, and procuring the help of ministers, or christian friends; it is true, no man can communicate grace to another, it is not in our own power to effect it, but we must endeavour after it. O how Paul was concerned for his countrymen, the wilful unbelieving Jews, Rom. x. 1: his prayers, tears, and wishes, speak him to be their cordial friend, who were his bitter enemies. God commanded Abraham that all his house should be circumcised, to have him go as far as he could to draw them into affinity with God. True grace makes men love relations better than ever, and causeth natural affection to run in a spiritual channel, for the good of their souls. Be concerned to make a jointure of the promises, to thy wife, an entail of the covenant to thy children; this is a thousand times better than leaving them thousands a year. Should not you desire that one heaven may hold those hereafter, whom one house holds now? O tremble to think when your house breaks up, of one going to heaven, another to hell; let your charity extend itself to all you are acquainted with, and let your practice be convincing and winning to all about you. Alas, what multitudes are there, who are unacquainted with this mighty work, yet must feel it, or never be happy; do what thou canst to call in all to this blessed feast, "yet there is room," Luke xiv. 22. Hast thou none thou lovest so well as to wish them thy happiness? There is no envy in spiritual things, the more and happier, and no less cheer; it will add some pearls

to thy crown to win souls. If a neighbour locked himself in a room on design to murder himself, wouldst thou not break open the door and rescue him? O happy souls that are employed and successful in this spiritual charity!

I have long ago, seen a book written by Mr. Reiner of Lincoln, called, "The Rule of the New Creature," to which I refer the reader that can procure it; at present I shall sum up my thoughts in these twenty brief rules of direction.

(1.) Reason justly, and reckon straight; let your reason be regulated by the word of God; it must follow faith, not give law and measure to it. Be sure your accounts be squared by the golden rule of scripture; set all straight against the reckoning day.*

(2.) Demur at no sufferings for Christ, to avoid sin against Christ; be content to fill up Christ's sufferings; nay, be glad to suffer, but tremble to sin. Sinless sufferings are sweet, but sweet sins will be bitterness in the end.† Bear any thing but sin.

(3.) Profess what you are, and be what you profess. Think not to dissemble among men, for worldly ends; but upon a just cause and call, own godliness; be indeed Nathaniels; pretend not more than truth; God knows the heart.‡

(4.) Serve God for the service itself, not for wages; or rather, let his service be your wages or reward, for so it is, "God himself is the saint's reward." Hypocrites make religion a step to ascend to some other end; let God be thy all.‖

(5.) Be most for God, when God seems most against

* Luke v. 21. 1 Pet. iii. 15. 1 Cor. iv. 3. Rom. xiv. 12.
† Col. i. 24. Matt. v. 11. Heb. xi. 26. Rev. ii. 22.
‡ Rom. x. 10. Matt. x. 32, 33. John i. 47. Heb. iv. 13.
‖ Psal. xix. 11. Gen. xv. 1. Matt. vi. 4. Psal. lxxiii. 25.

thee. It is pure faith and love to hang close to an angry God: to conceive most hopes through Christ, when sense and reason make against you, this is a faith to be admired.

(6.) Join pure precepts to precious promises; look on precepts as pure, therefore lovely;* dare not to divorce them; see to the law within you, and before you, as well as plead the promises of the gospel for you.

(7.) Be best when least in men's sight. God and souls have the most intimate intercourse when alone;† make God your witness, not men only. Friends are most familiar when they are withdrawn from all other company.

(8.) Sail low, but aim high; conclude you have not attained to perfection; but still be designing it, be not high-minded, yet mind highest things, aspire to be better than others, "yet esteem others better than you," Phil. ii. 3, 4.

(9.) Do all you ought, not all you may:‡ walk to the height of a command, not to the utmost bound of lawful liberty, go not near the pit's brink, stand fast in your christian liberty, Gal. v. 1, 13; but do not always use it.

(10.) Be best when others are worst: be as Noah in the old world, Lot in Sodom, Timothy in Ephesus, Joshua among the Israelites; be hottest in the coldest weather, brightest in the darkest night, savour of heaven in hell.‖

(11.) Be rational, when most spiritual; do nothing at hap-hazard, or with a blind zeal, let all services be

* Job xiii. 15. Hos. vi. 3. Matt. xv. 28. Psal. cxix. 140.
† Heb. viii. 10. Rom. vii. 12, 14, 22. Psal. xvii. 3. Matt. vi. 6.
‡ Phil. iii. 13—15. Rom. xii. 3. Eph. v. 15. 1 Cor. x. 23.
‖ Gen. vi. 9. Neh. v. 19. v. 15. Phil. ii. 15.

reasonable. God's will is our rule, and his ways are equal; the highest reason in man, is to comply with God's pleasure.

(12.) Naturalize religion, and spiritualize the world; let godliness be as a second nature;* let common objects and occurrences, mercies and afflictions, be well improved to good ends and purposes; spiritual chymists turn all to gold, Rom. viii. 28.

(13.) Be dead while living, and lively in thoughts of death, Col. iii. 3. Gal. vi. 14. A child of God is a paradox, dead to the world, and crucified, yet the most active and vigorous person in the world: you must have the best death and best life, then fear not death.

(14.) Suit grace to every case: in confessing sin, mourn; in begging mercy, cherish desires; in thanksgiving, joyfulness, yet "rejoice with trembling;" in prosperity, have humility; in adversity, contentment; your foot must still stand in an even place. †

(15.) Let your life be a comment on your faith; let your believing and living be harmonious; let doctrine of faith, grace of faith, life of faith, sweetly correspond, "Doctrine being according to godliness, godliness according to truth;" let not head and hands be at variance. ‡

(16.) Eye God who eyes you in all you do; think the King of heaven sees thee, the omnipresent God is in the room with thee, the omniscient God knows thy heart; approve thy heart to God, let thine eyes be ever towards him, Psal. xxxiv. 15. xxvi. 3.

(17.) Answer to divine calls, when God hath a mouth to speak, have an ear to hear, and a tongue to say,

* Rom. xii. 1. Ezek. xviii. 29. 2 Pet. i. 4. Phil. ii. 20.

† 1 Cor. xvi. 31, 55. Heb. ii. 15. Psal. xxxviii. 18. Matt. v. 4. Psal. ii. 11. Phil. i. 3, 4. Psal. xxvi. 12.

‡ James ii. 18. 1 Tim. i. 5. Tit. i. 1. Rom. ii. 18, 23, 24.

here I am. Hear the word or rod, a call to duty or from sin; ask what is the meaning of this? O that I could attain God's end, and not resist or "quench the Holy Spirit."*

(18.) Observe and make up daily decays, keep on your watch that you sin not; but if you sin, remain not in it, but rise, mourn, and act faith on Christ, your great advocate, let not an ill matter go on quickly, recover your first love, Rev. ii. 4, 5.

(19.) Give no offence carelessly, and take no offence causelessly; let there be "no occasion of stumbling in you;" judge not uncharitably, take all that is said and done in good part; make no sinister constructions.†

(20.) When you have done all, say, all this is as nothing to appease God's wrath, or satisfy justice, in an absolute sense, or to do what is required in a comparative sense, "without Christ I can do nothing."‡

CHAP. XIV.

ANSWERS TO SOME CASES OF CONSCIENCE.

4. THE last thing proposed under this division was to answer some cases of conscience which pious people are ready to introduce, when this subject is brought forward.

1 *Case.* Whether it is possible that a man be a new creature, and not know it, since it is so remarkable a change?

* 1 Sam. iii. 10. Psal. xxvii. 8. Mic. vi. 9. 1 Thess. v. 19.
† Matt. xxvi. 41. 1 John ii. 1, 10. Matt. vii. 1.
‡ 1 Cor. x. 32. Luke xvii. 10. Phil. iii. 7, 8. John xv. 5.

Answ. I have hinted at this before, but observe it, you must distinguish between a reflexive sense of a change in heart and life, and a due apprehension of this change morally considered as saving; many a person can truly say, something hath been done, but I know not whether that which may be entitled a new creation, I am much in the dark about it; I cannot but say, I have had convictions, and something like conversion, though not consolation; I am kept still in dependance upon a promise, though I cannot say I have assurance of my interest in the covenant. Precious Mr. Paul Bains could say, "Sustentation I have, but suavities spiritual I do not experience." So you may have the root, though not the flower; water of sanctification, though not the oil of gladness; wait on God, and in due time you may have this cleared up to you; if "you follow on to know the Lord, his going forth is prepared as the morning," Hos. vi. 3. Grace and peace shall not be long parted; "Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart," Psal. xcvii. 11. It is not lost, but laid up and hid in the furrows of the believer's bosom.

2 *Case.* Is it possible that he who is a new creature, should have a self-accusing, self-condemning conscience?

Answ. You must distinguish respecting the conscience of a man condemning himself.

(1.) It may be passively, when our hearts censure us, and we stifle convictions, such a one indeed is self-condemned.

(2.) If we be active in condemning ourselves, it is a good sign, and a great duty, as we shewed before; but this query, refers to the state of a man, whether the conscience of a new creature may censure the real Christian, and condemn him as a hypocrite? To which I answer, If conscience act according to the rule of

the word, it must be regarded as God's officer, speaking by his authority, but if it speak not in God's name, and by his order, we may appeal to the higher court of the holy scriptures, and it is certain that conscience may be corrupted, and is often used by Satan, to deceive good men as well as bad, and they shall at last have their action against Satan for false imprisonment, and disturbing their peace. Your safest way therefore is to have recourse to the word, for conscience is but an under officer, and must be accountable for its verdict. Remember, it is one thing to have hypocrisy in thy heart, another thing to be a hypocrite; the best will find much guilt within them, which conscience rebukes them for, while they bewail it; but they are not therefore hypocrites.

3 *Case.* Whether God may conduct himself austerely as if he were an enemy to a new creature, that should seem to be dear to him?

Answ. Thou art a stranger to scripture, and the experience of all God's children, if thou think God must always be dandling this new creature on his knee, or giving it his embraces; no, no, he hath reserved the best things for the upper table in heaven; there is great reason that thou shouldst have his frowns, as well as smiles, to humble thy heart, exercise thy graces, discover the necessity of Christ, and the desirableness of heaven. God can and may, without any impediment to his love, hide it for a season from his own dearest child. David indeed called in question God's love and faithfulness, when he hid his face; but at last, he found that it was his infirmity, and doubtless, lamented it as his sin. God hath given abundant security in his promises of his love without present sense; you must not think much at him, if he do not come to visit you, and take you up in his arms as oft

as you would have him. Thou needest some operative physic as well as cordials; a son may merit a frown, as well as a smile from his father. God is a free agent; but it is well thou art so sensible of his access and recess, his smiles and frowns; it is a sign of some spiritual life in thy soul.

4 *Case.* But you said the new creature grows; I find it otherwise, I cannot see that I grow in grace, nay, I decline and go backwards, what think you of that?

I answer, As the Christian grows in grace, so he grows in light to discover his state; he sees more depravity in himself, and is still more sensible of decays in grace, which keeps him humble, self-denying and vile in his own eyes; that is growth too, bless God for it: but observe it, grains of allowance must be given to old age, when natural parts decay, and persons may not be so quick and lively as formerly, yet may be more solid and increasing in experience. Mr. Greenham said, "It is a hard and rare thing to keep up young zeal with old discretion." Dost thou not keep up a more constant course of duty, and cherish more settled resolutions for God? Is not thy heart more deadened to the world, and taken up with things unseen? art thou not more composed under afflictions? dost thou not more clearly discover and bewail spiritual sins? dost thou not long more after the good of relations, take more delight in God's word, breathe after more of God's presence in ordinances? Speak out, man, deal faithfully, bear not false witness against thyself; yet it is true, the growing tree meets with a fall of the leaf, and a sharp winter; still doth a spring come, and it grows in the summer. Peter's fall became the means of recruiting him to greater boldness for God; but I hope thou art "not a backslider in

heart," to dislike the ways of God; thou art but "overtaken with a sin," against thy strong purposes. When thou "sleepest, doth not thy heart wake?" Thou art not pleased with this declining state; "thy spirit is willing, but thy flesh is weak." *

5 *Case.* But, alas, I have such strong, impetuous, yea, imperious workings of corruption in my heart, as never any had that hath a principle of grace; none like me. Is it possible I should be a new creature?

I answer, The "heart knows its own bitterness," and wickedness, Prov. xiv. 10. Every gracious soul thinks his own heart the worst, because he knows it best. But who told thee that thy heart was so bad? was it always thus with thee? was there not a time when thou thoughtest thy heart was as good as any one's? is it not spiritual light that makes these unusual discoveries? "Whatsoever doth make manifest, is light." Did not sin "revive upon the coming of the commandment?" But friend, let me ask thee; Dost thou think that upon the planting of this new principle in the soul, sin should be utterly extirpated, and that thou shouldst hear no more of it? Dost thou not find even blessed Paul, "groaning still under a body of death?" Will not the flesh still "lust against the Spirit?" † Surely thou knowest little of a Christian state, if thou imaginest a total immunity from the body and indwelling of sin, in this world. It is well if sin be not upon the throne, though thou hast it in the field to fight with; the gospel privilege is, "sin shall not have dominion over thee, because thou art under grace," Rom. vi. 14.

6 *Case.* But what will you say of a man that can-

* Prov. xiv. 14. Gal. vi. 1. Cant v. 2. Matt. xxvi. 41.
† Eph. v. 13. Rom. vii. 9. Rom. vii. 24. Gal. v. 17.

not give a precise account of the time and manner of this divine change taking place in his heart, that never had such terrors as some have?

I answer, Will any say that the river Nile is no river, because men never found out the head of it? God is a free agent, and hath different seasons and manners of working. Some have been wrought upon in their younger days, they were religiously educated, and never stept aside into gross sins, and God steals in gently with them, he opens their hearts as he did Lydia's, Acts xvi. 14. and gently attracts them to himself, picking the lock, as it were, without much noise; whereas he breaks the wards in others, with overwhelming convictions, as he has dealt with Paul, and Luther, and others, among whom Mr. Bolton may be mentioned. Some are of mild and gentle natures, and God sees they cannot bear hard blows, which some others need, who are of sturdy and stubborn spirits. Do not murmur, but thank God that he hath come so sweetly into thy soul; he knows thy frame and constitution. See the work be there, and a scriptural work, and leave God to his liberty. But this thou canst say through grace, it is not with thee now, as it hath been; as the blind man said, I may be ignorant of some circumstances, "but one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see," John ix. 25. Things are otherwise represented to me, and my spirit working otherwise within than formerly; so that I may say as Rebecca with her twins in her womb, "if it be so, or not so, why am I thus?"

7 *Case.* But alas, nobody knows what a frame of spirit I have in my prayers, such distractions and wanderings from God, as cannot be consistent with a spiritual change: what think you?

Answ. It is sad thing, that such vermin should

crawl in God's sanctuary, especially when thou art in God's immediate worship. But dost thou approve of them, and make them welcome? are they not troublesome guests? do they not forcibly assault thee, as so many unmannerly visitants? Suppose in your family as you are kneeling in prayer, a noisy, boisterous rabble stand under your window, roaring and hallooing, though it disturb you, would you thence question your sincerity in the duty? And it is all one, whether the disturbance be in the room or in the bosom, since both are disliked as a burden to thee. I often reflect on a passage I read many years ago,* "The good Lord keep the hearts of his people under a due sense of their distractions, for they are never like to be rid of them while they live." Thou dost reckon thyself to be as in the belly of hell with Jonah, while thou art yoked with such thoughts and sendest many a deep groan to heaven against them, and sometimes dost obtain some help against them, and gettest near thy God in duty.

I shall however add no more of these cases, but only two words as a close of this discourse, for if poor doubting souls would, instead of their complainings and objections, but do these things, it would tend more to their satisfaction, and the glory of God.

(1.) That they would spend that time in examining their own consciences, which they take up in fruitless complaints. Alas, many professors have got a method of whining and complaining to ministers and christian friends, and think to be better thought of for such complaints; but this is a sad judgment of God, for persons to "pine away in their iniquity, and yet mourn one towards another," Ezek. xxiv. 23. If persons would spend such time in searching their own consciences

* Mr. Thomas Shepard Treat. on Distraction.

and conversation, it would tend more to clear up the sincerity of their hearts, and a saving work of grace. Begin, sirs, enter into your closets, commune with your own hearts, deal faithfully and effectually; put not off yourselves with unproved conceits and groundless imaginations, but go through with the work: ransack your hearts, they are your own; be not put off with such mannerly excuses as Rachel's: take such an account as you must give to God: let no darling sin escape your view, or the least grace be denied with any scorn or disregard. When David "thought of God, he was troubled," and expresseth many discontented murmurings; but when "he communed with his own heart," he clears God, and condemns his unbelief, indicts the thief, and clears his conscience of that troublesome Jonah in his bosom. This plain dealing evidenceth a Christian's state sooner than wrangling; and yet if still thou art at a loss, appeal to God, and say as Job, "Thou knowest that I am not wicked;" or, as Peter, "Thou knowest that I love thee;" or, as David, "Do not I hate them that hate thee? Search me, O God, and know my heart." * As wise physicians trust not their own judgment about their own health, so the saint knows God's line reacheth lower than his own, and to his judgment he will stand.

(2.) Instead of complaining, commence vigorously the work of sanctification, to mortify the deeds of the body, "to cut off a right hand, and pluck out a right eye," Matt. v. 29. When you have searched out the leaven, purge it out, "1 Cor. v. 7. Lay aside "every weight, and the sin which doth most easily beset you," Heb. xii. 1. Run the sword of the Spirit to the heart of every lust; "lay the axe to the root of the

* Psal lxxvii. 3, 6. Job x. 7. John xxi. 15. Psal. cxxxix. 21, 23.

tree;" cut up sin by the roots. If a vain thought, a proud, sensual, worldly, passionate thought arise in your hearts, suppress it, militate against it, "crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts," Gal. v. 24. So will you evidence yourselves to be Christ's, 2 Cor. vii. 1; be daily "perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Observe wherein you missed it in such a duty, and be still improving, as Apelles, when he had drawn a picture, was ever and anon spying defects, and then altering with his pencil; so do you. Observe when conscience speaks such language as the following: Oh my soul, in such a duty thou wast cold, distracted, unbelieving, hard, and vain; in such an affliction thou wast froward, peevish, and discontented; in such a company thou spakest idly, or wast guilty of sinful silence; in the enjoyment of such a mercy, or in thy prosperous state, how proud wast thou, secure, self-conceited, and slighting others! Oh mourn for these faults, watch against them for the future; walk more closely with God, maintain daily intercourse with him and your own consciences; thereby you will be better acquainted with God and your own souls, and discern better how your principles operate; "for if you walk according to this rule, peace shall be upon you," Gal. vi. 16. Hence the blessed apostle's words, 2 Cor. i. 12, "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." Dying Hezekiah could plead this with God in his appeal, Isa. xxxviii. 3.

Oh sirs, learn to exercise every grace in every duty; the exercise of grace is the clearest evidence of grace, both to ourselves and others; as the man who confuted his antagonist, that disputed against motion, by starting up and walking. So do you walk with

God, "hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments," 1 John ii. 3, 6. If you walk as he walked, you evidence that you abide in him; as he "which hath called you is holy," so be "ye holy in all manner of conversation," 1 Pet. i. 15. If you expect that God's Spirit will witness with your spirits, and so subscribe your certificate for heaven, you must be uniform and universal in your course of godliness, both in your worship and walking, walking before God, and with God, Gen. v. 24. xvii. 1. Then indeed will you be found upright or perfect; but if thou hast any close drawer in the cabinet of thy heart, wherein thou secretest any beloved sin, or if thou delayest in thy journey along heaven's road, by idleness, sleeping, or backsliding, and losing thy first love, then no wonder if thou canst not discern the impress of God's image upon thy soul, but callest thy very state into question.

Yet above all, I advise thee to shut the mouth of conscience, with that only which has satisfied the justice of God. Nothing can reconcile a man to himself, but that which reconciled God and man.

It was Dr. Sibbs' advice, When the water of sanctification runs muddy, betake yourselves to the blood of justification. There, there must lie your comfort, and confidence, by this only must you answer all the objections raised by Satan and conscience, from justice, law, or whatsoever opposeth your peace, arising from the defects and imperfections of grace or this new creation within you: and indeed, the best of us must anchor and centre here, as to our justification, acceptance with God, or composedness of conscience.

Come then, let us go, in this gospel-way, to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel, Heb. xii. 24. Amen, so be it.

THE

TWO WORLDS;

PRESENT AND FUTURE, VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE;

WHEREIN IS REPRESENTED BRIEFLY

THE UNCOMFORTABLE STATE OF GOD'S CHILDREN IN THIS WORLD, AND THEIR EARNEST EXPECTATION OF FUTURE HAPPINESS WITH GOD.

AUTHOR'S EPISTLE.

TO MY DEAR AND LOVING NEPHEWS, AND OTHERS OF MY NATURAL RELATIONS IN LANCASHIRE.

DEAR FRIENDS,

THE providence of God hath separated me now forty-nine years from my native county, and from the vicinity of all my kindred in the flesh, into another county, where my lot hath been cast amongst a loving and a beloved people, where I have laboured long, and not without considerable success; yet notwithstanding my mind hath not been alienated from my dear relations, but as my poor prayers have been daily to God for you, so I have frequently visited you, preached the word to you publicly and privately, as I had a call and opportunity, written letters to you, sent my printed books to be perused by you, and thought no labour too much to be useful to your souls.

But it is now come to pass that I am superannuated, and much incapacitated for travelling into your parts, having outlived all my brothers and sisters, and being within a few days of the age of man, seventy years, far longer than ever I expected to have sojourned in this weary world, having been under the sentence of death four times by repeated fevers; and how long this frail life shall yet be prolonged, I cannot tell: but the providence of God brought to my thoughts a suitable word some months ago, which was mentioned as the subject of a funeral sermon, by a dying niece of mine, (my eldest sister's eldest daughter,) I formed a resolution to write it over, and to send it amongst you, and to the persons immediately concerned in that breach, as a testimony of my good-will to you. It is true, I had preached on the same text at home upon the like

occasion: the subject is important; I wish it had been better managed; however I shall follow it with my prayers, that it may be profitable to you and others.

My dear nephews and nieces, and beloved kindred, I can truly say with the blessed apostle, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for you is, that you may be saved," Rom. x. 1. You cannot but know how many of our ancestors have died in the faith, and are gone to heaven, having "fought a good fight, finished their course, and kept the faith," 2 Tim. iv. 7; they have offered up many prayers which are recorded in God's book, and presented many petitions which are still upon the file for their surviving posterity, which will be brought to remembrance either for your conversion, or the aggravation of your sin and condemnation. How dreadful will your case be, to be turned to the left hand with the goats, and hear that dreadful sentence, Matt. xxv. 41, "Go, ye cursed!" when you see your parents and progenitors stand on the right hand, addressed with that gracious word, "Come, ye blessed:" yea, when you shall see "many come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven," and you, "the children of the kingdom cast into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth!" Matt. viii. 11, 12. Oh what wounds will be left in your consciences, what stings and accusations, on considering parents' prayers and tears, sighs and groans, counsels and admonitions, their prudent carriage and pious examples set before you! You will not perish at so easy a rate as others. The houses where you live, the chambers you frequent, where they maintained constant communion with God, will be as witnesses against you, if yet you know nothing what it means. If they kept private days of fasting and prayer among God's children, and you slight it; if they were of a peaceable spirit, you contentious; if they were industrious in their callings, you slothful; if they walked with God in their families, and you walk at rovers; if they were diligent in reading the Scriptures and good books, and you lay them by and mind toys and trifles—how can you look your pious relations in the face? what can you say for yourselves? God knows how matters are, he "will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of your

hearts," 1 Cor. iv. 5, which you would be loth any should know, much less relatives distinguished for their piety. O think of this day of revelation, this day of appearing, and make ready for it.

Dear cousins, though you have had religious ancestors and relations, yet remember, Adam after his fall begat a son in his own likeness, not in God's, which he had lost. Grace is not hereditary, to be propagated to natural offspring: many godly parents in Scripture history had wicked children, and David "was conceived in iniquity," Psalm li. 5. Remember you are all by nature children of wrath, and a regenerating work must pass upon you; "except you be born again, you shall not see the kingdom of God," John iii. 3, so saith the Key-keeper, yea, sovereign disposer of heaven. Again, he asserts it with emphasis, "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," Matt. xviii. 3. Think not to be saved whether Christ will or not, or imagine you can find out some other way to heaven than the Scripture way; whatever Satan or your hearts suggest of this nature, you would be miserably gulled and beguiled by it at last; or if you rest in a notion or form of religion, you may die with a lie in your right hand, and never be undeceived till the flames of hell convince and confound you. Without mortification of our beloved sins, our blessed Lord tells us three several times, we must be cast into hell, that is, "into a fire that never shall be quenched; where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," Mark ix. 43—48. Truth itself hath said, "Without holiness no man shall see God," Heb. xii. 14; and it is the hell of hells, to be banished from God. As little as most men care for coming to God here, but are inclining rather to say to him, "Depart from us," Job xxi. 14; yet when God shall pronounce that dreadful sentence, "Depart from me," they shall have their eyes open, and be more affrighted with it than with fire and brimstone: for though the punishment of sense be intolerable, yet the punishment of loss is more formidable, because it is a loss of infinite good. There is an astonishing emphasis in that word, "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power," 2 Thess. i. 9. This,

this is the second death, the death of deaths, wherein sinners would gladly choose to die and be annihilated, but must not.

My Dear Friends, it may be, this is the last time that I shall address myself to you; make sure of heaven, nothing else can make you happy. Attend carefully on the means of salvation, hear the most powerful preachers, and stifle not convictions; when you have heard awakening truths, descend into your own hearts, and ask your consciences,—is not this my case? do not these things concern me? are they not of importance, and not to be slighted? then fall down on your knees, desire the Lord to set them home, and give you the experience and benefit of divine truths. They are not idle stories, or a sick man's dreams, but the eternal truths of Almighty God, according to which you must be judged at the last day; and that day may be nearer than you are aware. "How can you escape if you neglect so great salvation?" Heb. ii. 3, and expose yourselves to unavoidable perdition? The longer you defer repentance the harder will your hearts grow, and the more difficult will the work be; and God may justly give you up to yourselves, than which there is no greater judgment on this side hell: O tremble to think of that. Be afraid to be deceived, let no marks serve you for trial but Scripture characters, and be faithful in the examination. Let no duty satisfy you without communion with God therein: in all you do, propound the glory of God as your chief end: study the terms of salvation, faith, repentance, and new obedience, and see you be sincere: lament your inability to perform these terms without assisting grace, beg it earnestly of God, in the name of Christ: lay aside all divertisements till this work be done: fear no discouragements, God is able to bring you through, and "keep you by his mighty power, through faith unto salvation."

And you, my dear kindred in the flesh, that are of the spiritual kinship, members of the same body whereof Christ is the head, and that are travelling towards Zion, be much in praising God, because he hath remembered his holy covenant, and kept his promise to some generations; spend your time with and for God; do as much good as you can to relations and all about you; live exemplary lives; get your evidences cleared up for heaven; be watchful over your hearts and ways; strive against

sin; shake off sloth; make ready for heaven, and long to be there. What can you see in this world worth fixing upon for your rest, in comparison of the immediate enjoyment of God? Mr. Caryl saith, "It is a piece of great self-denial in a Christian that hath grounded assurance of heaven, to be content to live longer to do God service on earth." And truly it is no wonder when Moses has got to the top of Pisgah, if he long to be in the goodly land. But we must stay God's time, and surely there will be an end, and your expectation shall not be cut off.

"Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, which hath saved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work," 2 Thess. ii. 16, 17.

So prayeth your only surviving Uncle and Relation,

O. HEYWOOD.

Dec. 30, 1699.

THE

TWO WORLDS.

1 Cor. xv. 19.

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

These words contain an irrefragable argument to prove a life to come, and a resurrection. It is improbable, yea, morally impossible, that the best men should always fare the worst, contrary to reason and scripture, Isa. iii. 10, 11. The words contain these two things: a supposition, and an assertion.

1. If our hope in Christ be not stretched beyond the limits of this life:* for we are bound to fix our hopes upon Christ while we live; and even for the things of this life, as well as for the other, according to 1 Tim. iv. 8. But if we did not expect from Christ the good things of a future state in the world to come, then

2. "We are of all men most miserable." Here is the comparative for the superlative, ἐλεεινότεροι, more miserable than worldly men, that have their portion in this life, Psal. xvii. 14.

But whom doth the Apostle mean, when he saith "We?"

* Si spes nostra non porrigitur ultra terminum hujus vitæ.

(1.) We apostles, ministers of the gospel, that sell all for Christ, and preach the doctrine of eternal salvation by him. If this gospel be not true, we are the veriest arrant cheats among men, and shall fare accordingly; but we know what we do and say, we are no fools to be deceived, nor knaves to deceive the world with a fiction of our own brain: no, no, we know what we believe, and whom we have believed;* we are sure of the reality, certainty, and excellency of what we preach, we have suffered great hardships already, and dare venture our souls upon his authority, and our Lord Christ's resurrection gives us full assurance of it.

(2.) We believers, who renounce the pleasures, profits, and honours of this world, who are daily obnoxious to the cross, and exposed to persecutions; surely we are no better than madmen if we did not believe the immortality of the soul, and life to come: for the Sadducees that denied the resurrection, said, "there was neither angel nor spirit," Acts xxiii. 8, and indeed our hope depends on Christ's resurrection, 1 Pet. i. 3, for who would believe in a dead Christ, never to live and rise again?

Hence this doctrine,—*That none are so miserable as real saints, if all their hopes and happiness were in this lower world.*

The Hebrew Rabbies divide the world into three parts:

1. Inferior, the lowest world: this terrestrial globe consisting, (1.) of sea, lakes, and rivers; (2.) deserts, and solitary, uninhabited places; (3.) the inhabited part.

2. Middle, or inmost world; that is, the spheres, containing the aerial region and starry heavens, where the vast luminaries are placed in their orbits.

* 2 Tim. i. 12.

3. The superior world, where God himself manifests his immediate presence to his glorious angels and glorified spirits. This is called the heaven of heavens, paradise, the high and holy place, whither the glorified body of Jesus is advanced.* It is true that God's children centre their spirits and best affections there, of which state it is said, 2 Cor. iv. 18, "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

In the prosecuting of this doctrine, I shall speak to it by way of explication, confirmation, vindication, and application.

1. For explication, observe these four maxims:

(1.) The expression in the text implies, that the church of Corinth was deluded with the imagination of an allegorical resurrection, such as Hymeneus fancied, saying, "that the resurrection is past already," 2 Tim. ii. 17, 18, importing that it was to be understood, in a spiritual sense, of regeneration, which indeed is called a resurrection with Christ;† but this is a preparative to the second, which the apostle here asserts and proves.

(2.) The text doth not favour their unscriptural doctrine, that think souls sleep with the bodies till the general resurrection; or as though Paul dreamed of the heathen's Elysian fields, or Mahomet's paradise: but he takes it for granted, that the only hope of Christians refers to the last judgment, as completing the happiness of soul and body together; for the thief on the cross was to be with Christ in paradise, the day of his

* 1 Kings viii. 27. 2 Cor. xii. 4. Isa. lvii. 15.
† John xi. 15. Col. iii. 1.

death; and Paul was to be with Christ at his dissolution.*

(3.) Possibly this expression was directly calculated for the apostle's days, wherein the christian name was most infamous amongst the grandees of the world; so that none durst give up themselves to Christ, but such as reckoned upon death: for the apostles and their followers were as it were appointed to death. † In all public calamities, heathens laid the blame on Christians, and cried out, Cast the Christians to the lions. ‡ Doubtless it was a very calamitous time, and this sentence was best adapted to it.

(4.) We must not think, that God's children have not in this life better things than wicked men have. They have God's favour, pardon of sin, peace of conscience: but these are not the things of this life, though enjoyed in this life. Faith in Christ fetcheth down precious treasures from heaven, and lifteth up the soul to heaven. Spiritual delights are transcendently better than sensual pleasures.

The meaning of the text then is this: if we had trusted Christ for worldly riches, pleasures, or honours, placing the advantage of our faith in worldly enjoyments; if our hope did not exceed the bounds of this mortal life, we should be very miserable: but we are not of the opinion of the Jews, or even some of Christ's disciples, who would erect a temporal kingdom in this world; no, no, our expectation is of the enjoyments of a better world.

2. For confirmation of this great truth, I shall demonstrate it by some particular instances, in an enumeration of difficulties which good men pass through

* Luke xxiii. 43. Phil. i. 23. † 1 Cor. iv. 9, 10.

‡ Christianos ad leones.

in this life: yet I shall not mention what is common to men, bad as well as good, but what is peculiar to them as the children of God. Such as these:

(1.) Pious persons have often the least share of the comforts of this life, in this world. They often receive their evil things with Lazarus sitting at the rich man's gate: it is the poor that receive the gospel, or are evangelized. "Hearken, my beloved brethren," and mind it carefully, it is worth taking notice of, "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of a kingdom?"* Ordinarily our Lord chooseth not his disciples from the potentates, and grandees of the world; not many mighty, not many noble are called: nor doth he promise to make them rich, when he hath chosen them. The apostles themselves were poor, yet making many rich. And Christ's sheep often feed on bare commons, while others live in pleasure on the earth.† This is what the world wonders and stumbles at, that our Lord keeps his servants no better: but they consider not that our Lord reserves the best wine for the last.

(2.) Suppose religious persons be rich, yet they cannot take their fill of the world as carnal men do. The world is the element of sinners, they take content in it, they wallow in it as a swine in the mire; their desires are after creatures, and they feast themselves without fear. There is a suitableness betwixt the faculty and the object; they are loth to check themselves, or to be interrupted in their sensual delight. But now pious men are delivered from this present, evil world: a gracious soul hath a better principle, and looks on things below with scorn, and holy disdain; he is as a weaned child, quite alienated from the best that the world can offer;

* Luke xvi. 20. Matt. xi. 5. James ii. 5.

† 1 Cor. i. 26—28. 2 Cor. vi. 10. James v. 5.

yea, the Christian is crucified to the world, as the world is to him; he mortifies his attachment to things below, and dares not freely avail himself of lawful liberty, lest that liberty be an occasion to the flesh, and so gradually draw him to sin. In delicious meals he puts a knife to his throat, and he is jealous lest he be drawn aside to excess; yea, he keeps down his body by fasting and mortifying exercises, lest he be miserably enticed to sinful acts. However, the devout soul can look through the best of the world, and finds all here below but vanity and vexation of spirit.*

(3.) Religious persons meet with more opposition and persecution in this world than others do; the world will love its own, but such as are chosen out of the world are hated by it, John xv. 18—20. No wonder if this strict sect be every where spoken against. Every Ishmael will mock Isaac, and such as are born after the flesh, will persecute such as are born after the Spirit: so it is now; scarce any on this side the grave have endured such tortures as Christians have done.† A Christian is a cross-bearer: ‡ yet there are strange, seeming contradictions, see 2 Cor. vi. 4—11. We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God; this is unavoidable; all sincere professors must be sure to prepare for it. ||

(4.) Pious people have much more work upon their hearts and hands than others have: not but that all have the same to do; even worldly persons have still more to do, but they shift it off, and are not actually engaged therein. Alas! they are not sensible of their

* Jude, 12. Gal. i. 4. Psal. cxxxi. 2. Gal. vi. 14. v. 13. Prov. xxiii. 2. 1 Cor. ix. 27. Eccles. ii. 17.

† Acts xxviii. 22. Gen. xxi. 9. Gal. iv. 29.

‡ Christianus crucianus. || 2 Cor. xi. 23—27. Acts xiv. 22. 2 Tim. iii. 12.

state, but believers lie under deep convictions of the necessity and difficulty of spiritual duties, and especially of faith, love, and repentance, being stirred up and exercised; they have privileges to improve, ordinances to prepare for, communion with God to maintain, many commands to obey, which are of great latitude; for "thy commandments," says David, "are exceeding broad:" they respect God immediately, men, relations, christian brethren, with reference to advice, comfort, and admonition; there is an abundance of sins to be purged out, filthiness both of flesh and spirit. The gracious soul discerns more evil in, and danger by unbelief, pride, hardness of heart, and hypocrisy, than others do.

(5.) Pious persons are more concerned for the church of God than others are: upon them, in some sort, lies the care of all the churches.* They put their shoulders, though weak, under the interests of Christ. A good man, like David, is not quiet though in a cieled house, while the ark of God dwelleth under curtains; yea, with old Eli, his heart trembles for the ark of God. When Nehemiah heard bad news of the church's affliction, he sat down and wept, and mourned certain days: so the city Shushan was perplexed when others rejoiced. And it cannot be otherwise; for all the reproaches belched out against God and his church, fall upon real saints; they cannot but sympathize with the head and members of the body. Such are like-minded, and naturally care for the good of the church.†

(6.) Pious persons are more affected and afflicted with others' sins against God, than people generally are. Irreligious men rather exult over the sins of professors,

* 2 Tim. i. 6. Psal. cxix. 96. 2 Cor. vii. 1. 2 Cor. xi. 28.

† 2 Sam. vii. 1, 2. 1 Sam. iv. 13. Neh. i. 4. Est. iii. 15. Psal. lxix. 9.

and please themselves that others are worse than themselves, and say, "I am not as this publican." But, oh how the sins of others go to the heart of a believer! "I beheld the transgressors," says David, "and was grieved;" yea, he shed rivers of tears for others' omissions and commissions. How was good Ezra vexed at the people's sins, and Jeremiah wept in secret for their pride. * Blessed Paul is humbled for, and greatly bewails the sins of the church of Corinth, 2 Cor. xii. 21.

(7.) Genuine Christians reckon a greater number of sins and duties than others do: not that they make more of either than God hath made; but their eyes are enlightened to see things more clearly and distinctly. Yet observe it, scrupulous consciences are apt to make more sins and duties than God makes; and as this is their sin, so it is their great affliction, perplexing them with many doubts. But judicious Christians inquire first, whether it be lawful? † by what warrant? ‡ have I a Scripture command to authorize such an action? Then, whether it become me under such circumstances? And lastly, whether it be expedient? for many things are lawful, that yet are not expedient, because they edify not, or are an offence to others, or are occasions of sin. The Christian avoids every appearance of evil, hates the garment spotted by the flesh: || there is however some difficulty here. A tender conscience begets many scruples about recreations, vocations, and conversations with men; see Dan. i. 8: but a carnal heart ventures at all, makes no scruples, and censures those who do, as making more ado than needs, as being more precise than wise.

(8.) Believers have more temptations from Satan

* Luke xviii. 11. Psal. cxix. 136, 158. Ezra ix. Jer. xiii. 17.
† An liceat, an deceat, an expediat. ‡ Quo warranto.
|| 1 Cor. x. 23. 1 Thess. v. 21, 22. Jude, 23.

than sinners have. The devil blinds wicked men's eyes, rocks them asleep, locks them up in ignorance, and so they are led captive by Satan at his pleasure: he is sure of them, and lets them alone in security. But oh what dreadful assaults doth this fiend of hell make against real saints! sometimes shaking and sifting them as wheat, that nothing but bran may remain; at other times, laying snares and stratagems to circumvent them with his devices. He sometimes transforms himself into an angel of light: sometimes lurks as a serpent, to gull and beguile them: oft-times he comes in his own colours, as a roaring lion to affright or devour them;* and when he appears thus, though it be most terrible, yet it is less dangerous. Says Mr. Rutherford, I love a rumbling and roaring devil: this drives the Christian from him to his strong hold. Sometimes Satan comes with hideous injections of atheism, blasphemy, black and dreadful thoughts of God; as it is said of Luther, † "frightful things concerning God and religion:" so that the Christian is oft weary of his life, and could wish himself out of the world, Satan's walk.

(9.) A real Christian hath more combats and conflicts in his own bosom, than unregenerate men have. Alas! carnal men glide down the stream; the strong man armed keeps the palace, and the goods (the faculties) are in peace. They have no conflicts within, except it be between conscience and the will; but the wilful will soon quells the natural conscience, then the man is quiet in sin. But renewing grace hath a party in the same faculty. There are two armies in one man; Jacob and Esau, twins in the same womb. There is an I for God, and an I for the flesh; "the good that I

* 2 Tim. ii. 26. Luke xxii. 31. 2 Cor. ii. 11. xi. 3, 14. 1 Pet. v. 8.
† Terribilia de Deo, horribilia de fide.

would, I do not." O what hard and irreconcileable strugglings are there in the Christian's breast! "Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh."* How hard to get to duty, how hard to keep with God in duty? When the Christian would repent, believe, meditate, pray, obey, he is so fastened down with the sin that doth so easily beset him, that he knows not what to make of himself: he is weary of his life with this dead body tied to him, and cries out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?"

(10.) Believers have more apprehensions of God than others have, and are more afraid of offending him. Carnal men are apt to think God is altogether such a one as themselves, and are ready to say, "The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it," he winks at small faults: God is merciful, these are venial sins and infirmities, God will take no notice of them: but the pious Christian looks on his sin through a magnifying glass, and sees the aggravations of that, which the world accounts a peccadillo. David cries out, after numbering the people, 2 Sam. xxiv. 10, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done; I have done very foolishly." Besides a good man hath awful apprehensions of God's justice, holiness, and truth, in executing his threatenings. Josiah's heart was tender, and he humbled himself upon hearing God's threatenings. David saith, "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments."† So did Habakkuk, chap. iii. 16. And had not the believer relief in Christ, such thoughts would swallow him up; yet faith in Christ is not always at hand, and then he is exceedingly daunted.

* Luke xi. 21. Cant. vi. 13. Rom. vii. 15, 20, 24. Gal. v. 17.

† Heb. xii. 1. Rom. vii. 24. Psal. l. 21. xciv. 7. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 27. Psal. cxix. 120.

(11.) Yet further, pious men are greatly afflicted with God's withdrawings and the hiding of his face. Sinners know not what this means; they think God loves them, though they know not what special love signifies. Poor creatures, they have no qualms upon them, "no bands in life or death; their strength is firm, they are not in trouble as other men." How often do God's children experience sad eclipses; God withdraws from them his quickening influence, their hearts are not enlarged God-wards at seasons, but they complain they are hardened from God's fear. How oft do we find God's dearest children cry out, "Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and countest me for thine enemy?"* They complain they go forward seeking him, but cannot find him, Job xxiii. 8, 9. David, Heman, and even Christ himself have complained of God's forsaking them, not totally and finally, but in their present sense and feeling. And this is a doleful case, an insupportable burden, yea, a kind of death to them. This made the Psalmist cry, "While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted."† David complains of broken bones. None knows what this means but they that experience it.

(12.) Once more, sincere Christians are much liable to fears and jealousies about their spiritual state. The ungodly seldom call this in question, they have always been of a good belief. Their maxim is, Hope while thou breathest. They have honest hearts; and if at any time they dispute their condition, they quell their fears, and quiet their spirits with their good wishes, vows, prayers, attending on ordinances, and acts of charity. But believers have frequent returns of fears, not only respecting their duty, "to work out their

* Psal. lxxiii. 4, 5. Isa. lxiii. 17. Job xiii. 24.

† Psal. xxii. lxxvii. lxxxviii. Isa. l. 10. Psal. lxxxviii. 15.

own salvation with fear and trembling;" but from the consideration of the treachery of their hearts, subtlety of Satan, paucity of sincere believers, and importance of religion; they are ready to fear, lest a promise being left of entering into rest, they should seem to come short of it: nay, it is well if there be not oft too much slavish fear in the hearts even of the best. It is true, perfect love casteth out this fear; but alas! love is not yet perfect, no more than other graces, therefore returns of this fear may be consistent with sincerity, and fear hath torment. Hence it is in all these respects, that if pious men had all their hope and happiness in this life, they would be most miserable.

You will say, All God's children are not thus exercised, many have a more easy passage to heaven. I answer, some have. But all may expect such troubles at one time or other of their lives. "What son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?"* As long as as there is malice in Satan, corruption in our hearts, or defects in our graces, we may reckon on such troubles as these. Our Lord hath said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me," Matt. xvi. 24.

3. The next general consideration respects the vindication of the saints of God in this their choice. And this may seem necessary; for if God's children be greater sufferers than others in this world, they may be in reason, and are by carnal men, esteemed the greatest fools in nature, who bring upon themselves such troubles in hopes of future happiness, which no man ever saw, nor is capable of seeing in this world; they however cast the allurements of the world at their heels, and judge all men fools beside themselves. Who will believe them?

* Phil. ii. 12. Heb. iv. 1. 1 John iv. 18. Heb. xii. 7.

Ans. (1.) The eyes of converts are opened to see things otherwise than most do, or than they themselves formerly did. Satan held his black hand over their eyes, but now God "hath shone in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 4, 6. All the rest of the world have but one eye, Christians have each two eyes, of reason and grace. The scales of ignorance fall from their eyes: the black veil is taken away by the Spirit's illumination. "The eyes of their understandings are enlightened to know the hope of his calling, and the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints," Ephes. i. 17, 18. They are placed a degree higher than others, and the higher they stand, the further they see. Our Lord accounts them friends, and courtiers know more of their king's counsels than others: "His secrets are with them that fear him." The emerald helps failing eyes, so doth the Spirit, 1 Cor. ii. 10—12.

(2.) The graces of faith and hope look beyond time, at things invisible.* Hope that is seen is not hope, but that which we wait for with patience. Right hope is fixed beyond the veil. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith," Gal. v. 5. It is essential to the christian religion, to look not at things seen, but things not seen, that is, eternal, 2 Cor. iv. 18.

(3.) The new nature furnisheth the Christian with a holy *impetus*, and tendency to things beyond time and sense. Believers are renewed in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, after the image of God, and thereby they are attracted to invisible objects: † being

* 2 Cor. iii. 16. John xv. 15. Psal. xxv. 14. Heb. xi. 1, 27.
† Heb. vi. 19, 20. Rom. viii. 24, 25. 1 Thess. i. 3. Col. iii. 10. Eph. iv. 24.

"risen with Christ, they seek those things that are above." They are not satisfied with corporeal, perishing objects: nothing pleaseth them but invisible realities.

(4.) Pious souls have a pledge and earnest of future things; a foretaste, prelibation, and anticipation of heaven. God hath "given the earnest of his Spirit in our hearts," 2 Cor. i. 22. This is both a privilege and assurance of the bargain;* a pledge is returned back, but an earnest is kept as part of the bargain, till all be consummated:† so that God is, in some sort, a debtor to make good his promise, and "the righteous hath hope in his death," Prov. xiv. 32.

The subject may now be considered as affording scope for *Instruction*, *Conviction and Lamentation*, *Examination*, and *Exhortation*.

I. Instruction. 1. It teaches us that there is a future state in another world, a world to come, besides this present evil world. God hath made more worlds than one. Things will not always continue in the same posture, as the profane scoffers of the last days affirm, saying, "Since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation;" which the apostle disproves, 2 Pet. iii. 3—10. All things are upon the wheel of change. Actors upon the stage are successively taken off, and at last the stage itself shall be taken down, 1 Cor. vii. 31. There is a "world without end."‡

2. There be some persons in this world, that shall be counted worthy to possess a better world: so our Lord saith. "But they which shall be counted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the

* Col. iii. 1, 2. 2 Cor. v. 5. Eph. i. 13, 14.

† Pignus redditur, arrhabo retinetur.

‡ Heb. ii. 5. Eph. i. 4. Heb. xi. 3. i. 2. Eph. iii. 21.

dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more, for they are equal unto the angels." There are mansions above, which Christians shall enter and abide in; there are heirs of the heavenly kingdom.

3. A believer's best is reserved for the last. The Ruler of the feast said concerning the water turned into wine, "Thou hast kept the good wine until now;" * so doth our Lord. Sinners have their best things in this life, saints in the other. Philosophers could say, that no man is happy before death. Solomon saith, "The end of a thing is better than the beginning." † I am sure it is so in this affair: heaven is better than the earth. The good things of the throne are better than the good things of the footstool.

4. Real saints are the only happy men: none are truly happy but pious souls, "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace," Psalm xxxvii. 37. Let their way be never so rugged, mountainous, and difficult, believers have the eternal God for their portion, Christ for their ransom, the eternal Spirit for their comforter: and though God in a little wrath hide his face from them for a moment, yet with everlasting kindness "will he have mercy on them," Isa. liv. 7; clouds will quickly blow over, and an everlasting sunshine shall comfort God's afflicted children; when all the world is in an uproar, the saints shall lift up their heads and say, "Our redemption draweth nigh," Luke xxi. 28.

II. Conviction and lamentation over those poor souls who have no hope but in the present life. Woe, ten thousand woes, "to the inhabiters of the earth and

* Luke xx. 35, 36. John xiv. 2. James ii. 5. John ii. 10.
† Ante mortem nemo felix. Eccl. vii. 8.

of the sea, that have their portion in this life," and not above.

1. The things thou enjoyest here are but temporary, quickly gone; "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof;" the lustre thereof, the use thereof; "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats, but God shall destroy both it and them."* Your souls will outlive your goods and bodies; and what will you do for a portion when these are gone? You have neglected heaven and cannot keep earth.† "O Lord, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth," Jer. xvii. 13. Surely the fire that consumes the earth will blot out your names, your memorial shall perish for ever.

2. Your lives are very uncertain. You little know, "what one day may bring forth."—"This night may thy soul be required of thee;" and thou mayest launch forth into the vast ocean of eternity. You are but frail, mortal creatures, you "dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth." Your breath is in your nostrils, turned in and out every moment; as many members, senses, and pores in your bodies, so many doors to let in death. When God "riseth up, no man is sure of his life;"‡ then all your contrivances fail and vanish, Psal. cxlvi. 4. Study James iv. 13, 14.

3. A boundless eternity comes in the rear of this short life; an everlasting happiness or misery. "Wicked men go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal," Matt. xxv. 46. O methinks,

* Rev. xii. 12. Psal. xvii. 14. 1 John ii. 17. 1 Cor. vi. 13.

† Cœlum negligimus, terram non retinemus.

‡ Prov. xvii. 1. Luke xii. 20. Job iv. 19. xxiv. 22.

this word eternity should astonish and confound you! What ailed Felix that he trembled, when Paul at the bar reasoned on righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come? It is a wonder that an unconverted sinner abides in his senses, when he thinks of passing into a world of endless, restless, remediless eternity! so that Dion, an atheist, would rather choose to endure the greatest torment than to die.

4. When death hath struck his last stroke, there will be no remedy, no returning to life again, no message of reconciliation sent into the grave or hell. The door is shut, the gulf is fixed; there is no reversing of things; as sinners are found at death, so they must abide for ever. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment." Then will be the decision of their final state. The richest men may weep and howl for the miseries that come upon them.* Now farewell all their joys in this world, they must lodge with devils and damned spirits: better it had been for them that they had never been born. Crying at the door will avail nothing; pleading privileges will be rejected, "I know you not" will be the answer. O forlorn state of graceless souls! You are like to abide by it "till you have paid the utmost farthing," which will never be; after thousands, ten thousands, yea millions of ages, you will be no nearer an end, than the first moment you entered that infernal lake. O think on these things in time, consider the issue, you that "forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." †

III. Examination. What number are you of, saints or sinners? Are you content with this present life, or expectants of a better? As you love your

* Acts xxiv. 25. Heb. ix. 27. James v. 1.

† Matt. xxv. 11, 12. Luke xiii. 26. Psal. l. 22.

souls, and dread being lost, try your state; be not put off with uncertainties, nor presume without Scripture warrant. Judge yourselves by the same word that must judge you at the last day; you have it in your hands. Oh! be faithful to God and your own souls in this weighty case; it is not a trifling matter, it is as much as your souls are worth.

You will say, How shall we know our state for another world?

Answ. I shall briefly propound these ten questions, answer them faithfully as in the presence of the heart-searching God.

(1.) Are you begotten "again to this lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead?" 1 Pet. i. 3. Know for certain, this hope is not born with you, you are without hope by nature; yea, you live without hope till you be born again. I deny not, but most unregenerate sinners have a kind of presumptuous hope, but convincing grace breaks the neck of this, and drives them into woful despair, in order to bring in a better hope. Is thy former hope sunk, lost? hath converting grace introduced a solid, scriptural, well grounded hope?* it is only the poor that have hope. Hath God brought thee into the valley of Achor, and then opened for thee a door of hope? Do you turn to your strong hold as prisoners of hope? I despair of you till you despair of yourselves.†

(2.) Are you very jealous of yourselves and willing to be tried? You have heard so much of the nature of grace, that you grow very suspicious of yourselves, and fear you have it not, because so much goes to it; you think and say, "God forbid I should die with a

* John xii. 48. Eph. ii. 12. Job v. 16.
† Hos. ii. 15. Zech. ix. 12.

lie in my right hand;" I am afraid lest I should think myself something when I am nothing;* therefore I will prove my own work and heart, and desire the assistance of ministers and christian friends, and tell them my case; I will observe their experience and compare myself with them, go to scripture characters, lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, that my treacherous heart may not beguile me about this important case, how I may come off at last.

(3.) What are your thoughts most working upon, or taken up with, things seen or unseen? "Where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also."† What are your morning and evening thoughts, your cares, fears, and anxieties? Do you purposely set time apart to study eternity? What occasional meditations have you about this weighty subject? Mr. Ward, that holy divine, sat silent in company a season, at last out of a deep study cried out, "Oh! for ever, for ever, for ever," for a quarter of an hour together, being opprest with the solemn thoughts of an everlasting state; so will you be deeply concerned, so as almost to forget all other things, as those mentioned 2 Cor. iv. 18; little matter how things go with us in this world whether we be rich or poor, honourable or despised, if only it go well with us in the other world.

(4.) Do you feel in yourselves some evidences of a better state, which makes you willing to endure any hardship for it? Heb. x. 34, "Ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods." Why so, were they mad or senseless? no, but "knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance." It is strange that they despised worldly enjoyments, but they had better above; as it is said of Alexander going to conquer the

* Isa. xliv. 20. Gal. vi. 3. † Matt. vi. 21.

Indies, that he threw his gold about him, living in hopes to have enough there; so the believer is going to better riches. How knows he this? Why, he hath the counterpart thereof in his own bosom; something in his heart which answers that above. This he knows not from books or discourses, but from the workings of his own heart, God hath drawn a bill of exchange for better things in the other world; "And he knows whom he hath believed," and dares to venture his soul and all on his promise. Abraham and all his seed have something to build their strong confidence upon and from which to derive consolation, "when thay lay hold on this hope set before them."

(5.) Are you disposed to communicate your experience to others, for their benefit? The primitive Christians loved to be talking of their heavenly country, and declared plainly that they sought it;* and indeed "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." Anatomists observe, that the heart and the tongue hang both upon one string, so that there is a sympathy and proximity between them. The speech is both the index and the interpreter of the mind. "Come all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. O taste and see that the Lord is good."† I cannot but impart to my christian friends something of God's love to me, that they may praise him and love him with me. This is the duty and character of a child of God, "to be ready always to give an account to every man that asketh him a reason of the hope that is in him, with meekness and fear," 1 Pet. iii. 15. This hope will discover itself.

(6.) What is the tendency of your desires and prayers? Do you "hunger and thirst after righteous-

* 2 Tim. 1, 12. Heb. vi. 13—18. xi. 14.
† Matt. xii. 34. Psal. lxvi. 16. xxxiv. 8.

ness? If God would leave you to choose, the kingdom of heaven, or all the kingdoms of this world, which would you prefer deliberately? Are you of David's mind, Psal. iv. 6, 7, "There be many that say, who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." It is thyself I have chosen to be my portion, my heritage for ever. "The desire of my soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee," day and night, public and secret; "with my spirit within me will I seek thee early. My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in this dry and thirsty land, where no water is. Oh! when shall I come and appear before God?" The whole world is an insignificant cypher; many a time I have opened my bosom to thee, and uttered seriously the words of David, Psal. lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." Heaven would not be heaven without thee, and earth, yea, hell itself would be heaven, if I may enjoy thee.

(7.) Doth this hope of heaven purify your hearts, cleanse your hands, mortify your passions, and keep your souls at a distance from all occasions of sin? 1 John iii. 3, "Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure." You will not be afraid to be called Puritans in this good sense, but will study purity in heart and life. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,"* and none else; "for there shall in no wise enter" the holy city "any thing that defileth;" remember it, "none shall stand in his holy place, but he that hath clean hands and a pure heart." Deceive not yourselves, without holiness you shall never see God.† It is true, you find much pollution in

* Isa. xxvi. 8, 9. Psal. lxiii. 1, 2. xlii. 1, 2. Matt. v. 8.

† Rev. xxi. 27. Psal. xxiv. 3, 4. Heb. xii. 14.

your hearts; but do you bewail it, complain of it, hate it, and are you "cleansing yourselves from all filthiness, both of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God?

(8.) Do you make this your great case of conscience upon all occasions? "Men and brethren, what shall we do? what must I do to be saved? how may I inherit eternal life? asking the way to Zion with your faces thitherwards."* Are you solicitous and full of care, and thoughtfulness, till this great question be put out of question, upon scripture grounds? Sometimes you have hopes, then your fears return. What must a soul do in this case? I answer, he must venture himself on the promise of God. Job saith, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," and though he walk in darkness, he must stay himself on God; and when all is done he must appeal to God, desire him to search him, as David frequently did;† and as Peter, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee," John xxi. 15, 17. The soul setteth itself as a glass in the sun, as Monsieur de Zenti said of himself, to be throughly viewed.

(9.) What pains do you take for another world? do you not only seek slightly to enter into heaven, but do you strive even to an agony? do you frequent all ordinances, public, private, and secret? do you fight the good fight of faith, run the race set before you with patience, watch over your own hearts? Do you "seek first the kingdom of God, and labour hard for the meat that endures for ever." Do you give "all diligence to make your calling and election sure?"‡ are you never weary, is it your delight, your meat and drink

* 2 Cor. vii. 1. Acts ii. 37. xvi. 30. Matt. xix. 16. Jer. l. 5.
† Job xiii. 15 Isa. l. 10. Psal. xxvi. 2. cxxxix. 23.
‡ Luke xiii. 24. Matt. vi. 33. John vi. 27. 2 Pet. i. 5.

to do God's will? his commands are not grievous. When the hunters found Macedonius in his cave in the wilderness, and asked him what he did there? he asked them, what do you here? they said they hunted their game; he answered, "I also hunt after my God."*

(10.) What end do you propose to yourselves in labouring for the life to come? Are your hearts taken off things below, to study the things of eternity? You are not much taken up with the things of this life, good or bad, but make it your scope and business to pursue those of the life to come, 2 Cor. iv. 16—18, "We faint not," we are never weary, so as to desist our course. Why, what is the matter? μὴ σκοπούντων, we look not at, we make not seen things our scope, or aim, but things not seen, spiritual, eternal things. The enjoyment of God is the main thing we aim at. This, this is both the end of the work and of the workman. This is the object of my aim; "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Nothing short of heaven shall satisfy me. My relations, creature-comforts, yea, ordinances themselves, I will own, and use as helps, in order to obtain a better state above. O that I may at last "receive the end of my faith, the salvation of my soul!"† This is the frame and character of a candidate of immortality. Deal faithfully with your hearts herein.

IV *Use* is of exhortation, and which may be addressed to *worldly minded* and *gracious* persons.

As to the former. It is the hardest thing in the world to divorce men's hearts from the present world, and raise them to the unseen things of another life. We come upon a very difficult errand, to per-

* John iv. 34. 1 John v. 3. Ego etiam venor Deum meum.

† Finis operis et operantis. Phil. iii. 14. 1 Pet. i. 9.

suade men against their own sense, and venture all upon what they never saw. Most men are of the same mind practically, with that cardinal, who said, "He would not exchange his part in Paris, for his part in paradise." O wretched creature, Is not God better than the world? Is not the soul better than the body? Dare you call the gospel a fable? "What will it profit you to gain the whole world, and lose your own soul?" Suppose you had command of the universe, and all creatures were at your beck, what can they do for you? Can they rescue a soul from death, or save a soul from hell, or deliver it from God's wrath? Shall not the kings of the earth, the great, and rich, call to rocks and mountains, to cover and secure them from the wrath of the Lamb,* but all in vain?

Let me pause and ask these four questions:

1. Do you believe that you have an immortal spark within you, which will live when your bodies are turned to dust? The corruptible body and spiritual substance are two distinct things. "God breathed into man the breath of life, and he became a living soul." That is something distinct from the body; and at last the body returns to dust, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.† Our Saviour asserts, that the soul will have its existence when separated from the body, Luke xii. 4, 5. And do you think it wisdom to provide only for the worst part, and neglect the better, which is of more value and lasting duration?

2. Do you verily believe that these worldly things will save or satisfy an immortal soul? Do you think that these things are capable of making you happy? The creature is but the instrument, and can do us no

* Matt. xvi. 26. Psal. xlix. 6, 7. Rev. vi. 15, 16.

† Gen. ii. 7. Eccl. xii. 7.

good of itself; it is limited to act in its sphere, but the soul is above it. The creature is material, the soul, of a spiritual nature. The soul was made for God, immediately to love, serve, and enjoy him; creatures formed of matter were made for inferior ends. The creature is of short continuance, David saw "an end of all perfection;" but the soul runs parallel with the life of God, and line of eternity. Though the soul be finite, yet nothing less than an infinite God can content it. Solomon enjoyed the world in as ample a manner as ever man did, yet writes vanity upon all: and, what can the man do that comes after the king? Stop a little and see how others have sped in this case, before you venture too far.

3. Do you really believe that the best and worst of man is in a future state? that there is a heaven for the righteous, and a hell for the wicked, that the righteous go to heaven, the wicked to hell? and that though wicked men flourish in this world, "yet they are reserved to the day of destruction," and a blessed "inheritance is reserved in heaven for the godly."* Do you really believe this? If not, you contradict the God of truth in his promises and threatenings: and whose word shall stand, God's or yours? Or if you do believe it, and do not act accordingly, you are condemned by your own consciences, and out of your own mouths. Consider the helps you have now; it will aggravate your sin, and render your condemnation more intolerable, when you shall see neighbours and strangers "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, and you church-members the children of the kingdom cast out into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."†

* Psal. cxix 96. Eccl. xii. 7. ii. 17. Matt. xxv. 33—46.

† Psal. ix. 17. Job xxi. 30. 1 Pet. i. 4. Matt. viii. 11, 12.

4. What have you to say for yourselves? Will you plead privileges, as some did Luke xiii. 26, 27? Alas! that will but aggravate your sin and misery, for he will answer you, "I tell you, once for all, I know not whence you are, depart." Will you say you associated with wise virgins, and had oil in your lamps, crying at the door, "Lord, Lord, open to us?" He will give you the same answer, "Verily, I say unto you, I know you not," I will not own you, begone out of my sight. Nay, if you could plead that you have prophesied in his name, cast out devils, done many marvellous works, still he will profess unto you, "I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Still depart, depart, depart; none of these pleas were valid without a principle of grace, an interest in Jesus Christ: nay, we find that the mouths of guilty sinners will be stopped, whatever now they imagine they can plead then. They will be confuted and confounded, when the king shall say, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment?" The text saith, "he was speechless," Matt. xxii. 11, 12. At that day sinners will be nonsuited, and shall not have one word to say for themselves. O look to it, better be silenced here by conviction, than in that day by confusion: "Now every mouth must be stopped, and all the world must become guilty before God," † that by this means men may be driven out of themselves, and fly to the city of refuge.

But you may ask, what would you have us to do? I answer,

(1.) Study the vanity of sublunary good, the unsuitableness and uncertainty of all things in this lower world; the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and

* Matt. xxv. 11, 12. vii. 21. xxii. 46. Rom. iii. 19.

pride of life; these are the best things below the moon; and scripture and experience testify that the world passeth away and the lust thereof. Solomon long since hath passed this sentence upon them, "That all is vanity." And, why "wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?" Alas! these things have a non-existence as to soul concerns: they have nothing to do in this main affair; you cannot buy grace with silver, nor heaven with gold, nor soul-ease with sensual pleasures: "your gold and silver are cankered, yea, the rust of them will be a witness against you, and eat your flesh like fire."* However, there is a great snare in this world, when too hotly pursued, which excites "foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction." O how many have lost their souls by an eager pursuit of the world! Judas and Demas stand as monuments and a warning to all posterity. O look through the grave at this world, then you will see how insignificant it is! "Whose shall these things be which thou hast provided?" Can they advantage you in the grave, or in the other world, or shall you live for ever to enjoy these, or will their enjoyment make you happy? Ponder a little on this head.

(2.) Study the excellence and necessity of things above: consult the scriptures and the experience of all the saints. They will tell you, "that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," 1 Cor. ii. 9. Heavenly things excel earthly, as far as heaven is above earth. O the glorious above! "In his presence is fulness of joy, at his right hand are pleasures for evermore."† The Gauls having tasted the sweet wines made of Italian grapes,

* 1 John ii. 16, 17. Eccl. i. 2. Prov. xxiii. 5. James v. 3.
† 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. Luke xii. 20. Psalm xvi. 11.

never rested till they had conquered the country where they grew. If you had but a taste of heavenly delights, you would think no labour too much to obtain them; and if you would study them, you could not but desire them, your eye would affect your heart. Heavenly objects are most suitable to your heaven-born spirits. Let dingy colliers of the world dig in the earth; let your souls study spiritual objects. See the majesty of God, the excellency of Christ, and the sweetness of God-enjoyment, and then you will be so transported, as to take the greatest pains to get prepared for heavenly mansions.

(3.) Study the necessary qualifications for the enjoyment of God. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him," Heb. xi. 6; "whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have eternal life; this is life eternal, to know God and Jesus Christ" in a sincere and saving manner. "There is a repentance to salvation, not to be repented of; if you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live," that is, be saved. "Christ is become the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him."* Self-denial, renouncing the world, dedicating yourselves to God, walking according to the rules of the word; these and such like, "are things that accompany salvation."† O be concerned about these; if you intend to be happy, you must go in God's way, accept his terms, else in vain do you think to be happy: God will not abate any thing of what he hath lined out in his word as the conditions of salvation; you must therefore inquire with the convinced jailor, Acts xvi. 30, "What must I do to be saved?" Consult the scriptures, pro-

* John iii. 15. xvii. 3. 2 Cor. vii. 10. Rom. viii. 13. Heb. v. 9.
† Heb. vi. 9.

pound your case to ministers, ask christian friends, and be very serious in this weighty case.

(4.) Study the great end of your creation and redemption. Learn the meaning of the first question in your catechism, and the answer: "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy him for ever." What have you else to do? Do you think God sent you into the world to eat, and drink, and sleep, like the brutes? O remember you have noble souls, capable of knowing, loving, and enjoying God! Can you find in your hearts to neglect your chief good, and your highest end? Will you be so brutish as to mind only objects of sense? What did God put rational souls into your bodies for? Was it to contrive to be rich, or get estates, "or to make provision for the flesh," or to scheme and plod to maintain yourselves and families? Did not God make them for himself to serve him according to their capacities? Must animals serve God better than you, and rise up as witnesses against you? And can you effect any thing in your callings without God's blessing? Do you not read, "that godliness is profitable to all things?" Are not creatures unavailable without God's blessing? Yea, doth not God say, "He will curse your blessings if you lay it not to heart?"* Alas! sirs, "Wherefore do you spend your money for that which is not bread?" Why do you despise the true riches? Remember "one thing is needful;"† earth will avail nothing, heaven will recompence all your pains.

(5.) Duly weigh the ends of the righteous and wicked, the event of sin and holiness. Judge of these, not as you see at present, but as the issue will be. Judge not according to outward appearance, but judge righteous

* Rom. xiii. 14. Prov. xvi. 4. 1 Tim. iv. 8. Mal. ii. 2.

† Isa. lv. 2. Luke x. 40.

judgment. Read Job xxi. Psal. lxxiii. and xxxvii. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, the end of that man is peace," all is well that ends well. If believers have a tossing sea, they have a quiet haven. Look not on persons through the world's spectacles, be not determined by the world's jury. Stay till the last scene, and conclude not too soon. A decisive day is coming, "judge nothing before the time." Stand at God's bar, let scripture be heard, by which you must be judged. See the exit, "The wicked are driven away in their wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death."* The angel fetched poor Lazarus's soul, and carried it into Abraham's bosom; but the devil hurries away the souls of wicked men to hell-torments. Think with thyself, man, what number thou art of, and who is thy master; consider thus, how shall I come off at last, when the tables are turned, and all must appear in their proper colours; not as they seemed to men, or in their self-delusions; there will then be strange discoveries.

(6.) Attend diligently upon ordinances, divine institutions. When God sets up a candle, turn not your backs on it, waste it not, sin it not away, every sermon is an alarm for eternity, an offer of Christ and eternal life, slight it at your peril. You must give account of opportunities. Remember, "Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets." Read and study Prov. i. 20—32. Ministers treat with you in Christ's name, entreat you in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Come now and you are welcome, yield to the calls of God, stand out no longer, let not the word of salvation return in vain. Alas! why should "line be upon line, precept

* John viii. 15. Psal. xcii. 7, 8. 1 Cor. iv. 4, 5. Prov. xiv. 32.

upon precept?" yet you will not hear, but go backward, and so be broken, and snared, and taken. Why should the dust of ministers' feet, the studies of their brains, and sweat of their brows rise up as witnesses against you? Mind what you hear, and hear for the time to come. Apply what you hear, and live up to it.

(7.) Associate with God's people. Let those be your companions here, whom you desire to be with in the other world. David saith, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee."* As this is a good sign of your lodging with them hereafter, so it is a great help heaven-wards. For, godly persons will be counselling, admonishing and "provoking you to love, and to good works," edifying "and building up yourselves in your most holy faith," keeping one another lively, and helping you up when you are fallen. It is not good to be alone. Improve christian society, desire them to be faithful to you, to pray for you, and with you. An humble Christian may prove of great use to help you heaven-wards. Improve from the gifts and graces of all, "Go your ways forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed your kids besides the shepherds' tents," Cant. i. 8.

(8.) "Redeem time." Upon this moment depends eternity; twice was this sentence written from the prison in Rome. Improve every inch of time; be diligent either in your general or particular calling.† Be like Christ and Mary, the former was still doing good, the latter still receiving good. Time is precious; cast it not at your heels. God gives us not time to be lavished out on trifles: possess not days, weeks, months, or years of vanity. Live every day as if it were

* 2 Cor. v. 20. vi. 2. Isa. xxviii. 12, 13. Psal. cxix. 63.

† Heb. x. 24. Jude, 20. Eccl. iv. 9—12. Eph. v. 16. Col. iv. 5.

the last day, so your last will be your best day. It is a dreadful thing for men to spend their days as a tale that is told, to lavish out their time, *nihil agendo*, in doing nothing, or *male agendo*, in doing evil, or *aliud agendo*, in doing something else than what they ought: trifling, sporting, jesting, and drinking when they should be about their master's business. As, suppose a factor beyond sea, after seven years, should bring in an account of so much time and money, spent in hawking, hunting, gaming, frequenting alehouses and taverns, but little or no time spent about his employer's affairs: how would this be taken? Pray remember that text, Rom. xiv. 12, "So then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

(9.) Fall presently on soul-work, defer not at your peril. Observe and close in with the Spirit's suggestions. If you must not say to your neighbour, "go and come again, and to-morrow I will give, when thou hast it by thee;" much less must you say so to God. Imperatives have no future tense. Present despatch is essential to God's commands; he will not be put off with delays; the market lasts not all the year; time and tide stay for no man; what you do, do quickly, God will not always strive with you, nor wait your leisure;* besides your good intentions will cool, your hearts will grow harder, Satan get faster hold of you. Hence saith the apostle, "Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin," Heb. iii. 13; therefore when you are convinced that any thing is your duty, fall close to the practice of it; and what you see to be a sin, instantly renounce it; be quick at work, for God may be quicker than you are aware, and you can do nothing in the grave, Eccl. ix. 10.

* Job vii. 3. Prov. iii. 28. Gen. vi. 3.

(10.) Down on your knees before the Lord, confess your sins of omission and commission, your defects and imperfections in your best duties, your impotency and inability to help yourselves, earnestly beg converting grace, as Ephraim, Jer. xxxi. 18, "Turn me, and I shall be turned;" if thou dost this, the work will be done to purpose: and thou hast promised in the covenant of grace, to take away the heart of stone, and give a new heart, and put thy fear in our hearts, that we may not depart from thee; this I want, this I must have; I cannot be denied of it. A new heart is fit for new heavens; as for this world, it is too little for my aspiring soul, I cannot, I will not be put off with it; let the world go, so I may have God; let earth go, so I may have heaven. "Whom have I in heaven but thee, there is none," person or thing "I desire in comparison of thee." It is true, I am a beggar, and have nothing; but I find thou givest thy Spirit to such as ask him of thee.* I am a debtor, and cannnot pay one farthing; but Christ hath discharged the debts of penitent, believing souls. I am a great sinner and prodigal, not worthy to be called thy servant, much less thy son; but Christ came into the world to save sinners, yea, some chief of sinners. It is true, I cannot work faith or repentance in my heart, but thou canst; they are both the gift of God, they are covenant mercies; though I cannot claim them, yet I beg them for Christ's sake. O pay not my portion in gold, silver, pleasures, or honours; I cast away these things with a holy disdain, though I praise God for worldly conveniences; "What wait I for? my hope is in thee,"† thou art my portion in the land of the living; give me

* Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26. Jer. xxxii. 40. Psal. lxxiii. 25. John iv. 10.
† Luke xv. 17—19. 1 Tim. i. 15. Psal. xxxix. 7.

pardon, peace, grace, glory, the God of heaven, God in heaven.

The second sort are pious persons to whom this use belongs, by way of—*caution—counsel—comfort* and *encouragement.*

1. Caution. If this be true, that none are so miserable as real saints, should all their hopes and happiness be in this lower world; then first, be not weary of living in the world: life is a mercy, let no pressures make you discontented with it: this is too common when in some straits; and in an ill humour, some good men have wished for death. Moses saith, Numb. xi. 15, "If thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand." "Elijah requested for himself, that he might die."† Jonah would needs die of pettishness; and twice he said, "It is better for me to die than to live," Jonah iv. 3, 8; and God interprets this to be a fruit of his anger, or violent passion, verse 4; and indeed present pressures and disappointments are apt to breed discontent, because the holiest men have too much of sense, and too little of faith. But take heed of this, it is a fault:

For consider (1.) When thus you are weary of life, and would needs die in this sullen humour, you are most unready and unfit to die; you know not what you ask: when you come to yourselves, you will perhaps be of another mind: as the poor man under his burden, called for death, it came and asked what he would with it, he answered, only help me up with my burden. So it is a question, if death come indeed, and your eyes be opened, what mind you will be of. If you were yourselves, you would be loth to die in such a humour.

* 1 Kings xix. 4.

(2.) Your lives are none of your own, but at God's disposal; "to God the Lord belong the issues from death." Thus he holdeth our souls in life; our times are in his hands: it is a piece of arrogancy and presumption to dispose of ourselves, or imagine that any mortal man is *sui juris*, at his own disposal.

(3.) You are to look upon natural life as a mercy, yea, the foundation of all outward mercies. David saith, "Thy loving kindness is better than life;" as if he had said, if there were any thing better than life, God's love exceeds it. Hence it was, that in the midst of honest Baruch's sad complaints, and mixture of personal and public calamities coming upon him, God promiseth for all that, "thy life will I give unto thee for a prey," Jer. xlv. 3, 5. Surely that is worth accepting, thou hast no cause then to complain.

(4.) The wheel of providence may turn; you may outlive your present distresses, and see a fairer day, as many have done. Job cursed the day of his birth, but he lived to see a strange revolution, "God blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning." So it may be with you.

You will say, It is not merely affliction that creates my discontent and weariness of life; no, no, it is sin, this body of death, I am even wearied out with it.

I answer, It is well that this is your burden, but you must continue in the field till your Captain call you off, and give you a discharge. However, know that you must not absolutely, or impatiently desire death, merely to be rid of sin, but still with submission and under correction. You may perhaps be in a strait as Paul was, whether to choose life or death,* but still you must refer yourselves to God, let him use his pleasure. Should it be his pleasure that I should re-

* Psal. lxviii. 20. lxiii. 3. Job iii. 1—3. xlii. 12. Phil. i. 23.

main *still* longer *here* to conflict with spiritual enemies, if grace will support me, and God have any glory by me, I am content.

Oh, but you say, Why should I continue to live, I do no good in my place, I do but cumber the ground, and do not honour God.

Ans. (1.) No man doth know of what use he is while he lives. It is your humility to judge thus meanly of yourselves; that is good, only let not your modesty issue in discontent, but provoke you to more activity for God and usefulness in your generation. There is a medium between vain arrogance and base pusillanimity. Thank God if you be a stick in the hedge, though you be not a main post, or a pillar in the house of God. Be content to be dismissed, like old Simeon, Luke ii. 29, "Lord, said he, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word."

(2.) Let Christians on the other hand take heed lest they too eagerly desire to live, and be unwilling to die. In this case also the best of God's children may be loth to die; for death is an enemy to nature, though a friend to grace: it is "the king of terrors." Even good Jeremiah makes supplication that he might not "return to the house of Jonathan, lest," saith he, "I die there," Jer. xxxvii. 20. Christ tells Peter that even when he was old, they would carry him whither he would not, John xxi. 18. Alas! the best persons may linger in this world, as Lot in Sodom, though vexed in it. We are in bondage in these bodies of clay, but too like Israel, loth to leave our slavery.* It is the grace of God that must help us to look beyond death, that can make us willing to die. But grace is not always in exercise, and we know that death is a parting of the dearest friends, body and soul, as Jona-

* Job xviii. 14. Gen. xix. 16. Exod. xiv. 12.

than and David. The best believe but in part, yet when faith prevails, unseen things are most desirable: and the believer can say with triumphant David, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me," Psal. xxiii. 4. But "the spirit is willing," though "the flesh be weak."* As assurance increaseth, holy confidence gains ground. And why are you short, after making so long a profession and enjoying so many privileges? Dare you not trust God with your souls? Do not children long to go to bed in their father's hand, though in the dark? What have you been doing all this while? Are you in love with this polluted world? Do not you long to throw off this burden of sin? Is not your case suspicious, when you are so loth to die? Say to your dull souls as a good man did,† "Go forth my soul, go forth, to meet thy beloved bridegroom."

2. By way of instruction, counsel may be given to pious persons, in these ten particulars.

(1.) Study contentment. Be content with God's allowance in the world, be it less or more.‡ A little of the world will serve to bear your charges to heaven. Seek not to be rich, which may prove a burden to you. The text saith, "Abraham was very rich," *valde gravis,* very heavy; so the Hebrew. It is that which will render your passage to heaven more difficult, as a camel going through the eye of a needle: and this will make your accounts greater and worse to settle, beside the temptation and snare to which riches would expose you. A middle state is most eligible, wise Agur desired neither poverty nor riches.‖ Your busi-

* Matt. xxvi. 41. † Egredere, anima, egredere. ‡ Heb. xiii. 5.
‖ Gen. xiii. 2. Matt. xix. 24. 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. Prov. xxx. 8, 9.

ness is to derive your contentment from God's providence. Paul learned this hard lesson, Phil. iv. 12; so must you. God's allowance with his blessing is an eligible dish; let it not be patience perforce, because you cannot help it, but let it be your choice; a little time will mend things.

(2.) Take pains in heaven's road; you are not to work long, work hard. Think no labour too much; you know that it "shall not be in vain in the Lord." Your wages will abundantly compensate your work. These poor things of the world are not obtained without industry; and do you think to get heaven without diligence? "Strive to enter in at the strait gate," saith our Lord, "for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Sluggish seekers are final losers. "Work out your own salvation: labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life;" not that you must earn heaven with all your labour, for eternal life is God's free gift; but God hath determined, you shall not have it without:* in good earnest begin your work, watch and pray; ply hard at the throne of grace. "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure; fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on eternal life; watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong:"† live like saints, and you shall die as saints.

(3.) Draw forth your faith, and hope to better objects than this world affords, or can be obtained here. Indeed the proper object of faith is things invisible; and hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?‡ nothing attainable

* 1 Cor. xv. 58. Luke xiii. 24. Phil. ii. 12. Rom. vi. 23.
† 2 Pet. i. 10. 1 Tim. vi. 12. 1 Cor. xvi. 13.
‡ Heb. xi. 26, 27. Rom. viii. 24.

in this world is either suitable or durable, and therefore cannot be your happiness. I suffer hard things, *sed meliora spero*, but I hope for better: when the lease of my life is expired, I shall take possession of my inheritance. God is the hope of Israel; he hath helped me in straits; I have rich experience of assistance; these things I call to mind, therefore have I hope; were it not for this my heart would sink and break: "I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." In this land of life, a sojourner having to receive money, will remit large sums to his own country; so do you take letters of credence to be paid above.

(4.) Let your hearts go out to things above, study the excellence, certainty, necessity of these divine objects, that your hearts may be elated therewith. O how the thoughts thereof will sweeten your bitter pilgrimage; "set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." This is a sign you are risen with Christ, Col. iii. 12; where should your "hearts be but where your treasure is?" * O what "riches of the glory of the inheritance of the saints!" This is transporting. A young heir hath his thoughts running out upon his estate, which he is to enjoy when he comes to full age. Human art cannot take the dimensions of the third heavens, much less of those things, which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; nor hath it entered in the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." † But though you cannot comprehend them, yet you should admire them, and raise up your affections to them.

(5.) Make haste through this evil world to heaven,

* Jer. xiv. 8. Lam. iii. 21. Psal. xxvii. 13. Matt. vi. 21.
† Eph. i. 18. 1 Cor. ii. 9.

2 Pet. iii. 12, "Looking for, and hasting to this blessed day," and state. Do not you see how fast the blessed society is hasting home into the arms of their beloved? O why do you lag behind? Linger not like Lot in Sodom: lift up your feet and follow your leaders. It hath been said of old by some godly souls, Let us flee into the celebrated country above, there is our Father, there is rest, there is all.* You can have no rest here; the only rest is above with God. How must we haste, say you? I answer, Get your work done, your corruptions subdued, your graces perfected, read and practise what you find Paul did, Phil. iii. 12—14. Study the emphasis of the expressions διώκω, "I follow after," with utmost eagerness, ἐπεκτεινόμενος, stretching out head and hands like runners in a race.

(6.) Be content to leave this world, and go home. Say as David, Psal. cxx. 5, 6, "Woe is me, that I dwell in Meshech," this tiresome world. When shall I launch forth into that serene ocean of bliss? O that I may be delivered from this body of clay, and of death together; "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."* Heaven is my home, I shall never be quiet till my soul land there; I am content to live, but willing to die, that I may be with Christ. "To me to live is Christ, and to die gain; I groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with this heavenly house."† Are you yet in love with your fetters? Are you not weaned from this earth? Is not your life labour and sorrow? God will tire us out, by increasing our burdens, so that new troubles come daily upon us; "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."‡ Never expect that your tears should be fully wiped off here.

* Fugiendi citò ad clarissimam patriam, ibi pater, ibi requies, ibi omnia. † Rev. xxii. 20. Phil. i. 21. 2 Cor. v. 2.
‡ Psal. xc. 10. Matt. vi. 34

The truth is, we are daily making new work for repentance and affliction: we cannot cease from our own work till we enter into that blessed rest.

(7.) Persevere to the end of your days; hold fast till he come. "Be not weary of well doing, for in due time you shall reap, if you faint not: he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." The promise is performed to those who overcome. Hold on, hold out in God's work, or else you lose all: "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward, 2 John, 8; there must be a "patient continuance in well-doing," or no "eternal life."* The husbandman doth not sow and reap in one day. It is true, the Hyperboreans sow shortly after sun-rising, and reap before sun-set, because the half year or a portion of it, is one continual day with them. So it is in some sense to the saints after the day-star is risen in their hearts;* yet still they must have long patience, till reaping time come. Honour God, and do credit to religion by adhering close to God in the greatest difficulties.

(8.) Put yourselves into God's hands by faith and prayer. God alone is able to "keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, Jude, 24. You cannot keep yourselves, you are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." He gives power to the faint; but see that your hearts be sincere and sound in God's statutes, that you may not be ashamed.† If you have no root in yourselves, you will endure but for a time; yea, you may have a taste of the powers of the world to come, yet may fall away.‡ Be up-

* Heb. iv. 10. Gal. vi. 9. Matt. xxiv. 13. Rom. ii. 7.
† 2 Pet. i. 19. James v. 7, 8. 1 Pet. i. 5. Psal. cxix. 80.
‡ Mark iv. 16, 17. Heb. vi. 5, 6.

right and conscientious before God; fear none of those things that may come on you: keep God's way, and God will keep you: though your beginning be small, your latter end shall increase. Small measures of grace shall be preserved and crowned, when great gifts wither. Be persuaded that God is "able to keep that which you have committed to him against that day," 2 Tim. i. 12.

(9.) Live as candidates for immortality. Live as expectants of heaven, whither you are travelling, "let your conversation be in heaven."* Labour to do God's will here upon earth, with such faithfulness, cheerfulness, zeal, and constancy, as it is done in heaven. Live by heaven's laws, act with heavenly hearts, managing all your business in a heavenly manner for right ends, improving common objects for heavenly purposes. O discover a heavenly disposition in all you do! The pearl grows in the sea, and shines in the light. Labour to increase, though covered with waves of persecution, and shine bright in the firmament of the church; yea, so living below, and conversing with God above, that the "life of Jesus may be manifest in your bodies."† O beware of sin, which will obstruct your progress, obscure your evidences, increase your present trouble, and render your journey to heaven more tedious.

(10.) Do what you can to draw others with you heaven-wards. There is room enough, there are many mansions. The greater the number, the greater the joy. There is no envy in spiritual things. O that all my neighbours, friends, kindred may be saved! Counsel, instruct, admonish, persuade sinners to come in: every soul you bring unto God, will be a new pearl in your crown of glory. It is not only the business of ministers, but of private Christians to endeavour after the

* Phil. iii. 20. † 2 Cor. iv. 10.

salvation of all about them. "O that Ishmael might live before thee," saith Abraham! * Surely the everlasting welfare of men's souls should lie near your hearts. Study to do them good; "Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Consider one another to provoke unto love;† do what you can to save one another's souls: and know this, that "he which converteth a sinner from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins," James v. 20.

3. The last branch of this use, is for comfort and encouragement to God's children. Because,

(1.) Nothing that befalls you here shall be able to separate you from the love of God; tribulations, or distresses, or persecution, or whatever else you can name: nay, you shall be "more than conquerors," even triumphers, "through him that loved you," Rom. viii. 35, 37. It is true, we do not know what is before us, public or personal trials: but "fear none of those things that you may suffer; be faithful unto death." ‡

(2.) This yields comfort to such as have buried their pious friends and relations. You need not mourn or sorrow as others which have no hope; for they sleep in Jesus, and shall come again with him. || At present they are safely preserved from all the miseries of this wretched life; they would be loth to be sent back into the body again, to miss one day those joys which now they possess. They may say as our Saviour, to the daughters of Jerusalem, "Weep not for us, but weep for yourselves;" ‡ we are landed safe, but you are in the storm, weather-beaten, and in great hazard.

(3.) The worst things by the favour of God shall

* Gen. xvii. 18. † Heb. iii. 13. x. 24.
‡ Rev. ii. 10. || 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14. § Luke xxiii. 28.

prove beneficial: "All things work together for good to them that love God."* Temptations make you more cautious, and send you to the throne of grace. Persecutions quicken grace, afflictions are for your profit; yea, the out-breakings of corruptions humble you, make you jealous, send you into your own hearts; bless God if it be thus with you, and it will be so if you be God's children.

(4.) Death itself will be an advantage to you, the sting of it is plucked out, the grave is sweetly perfumed; and though it be an enemy to nature, yet it is the best friend grace hath; it is a trap-door to let you slip into heaven. A believer's motto, when dying, is "well for the present, and will be better shortly;" it is but shutting the eyes and opening them in heaven. By death the real saint goes,—from absence, into God's immediate presence—from defects in grace, to perfection—from deep sorrow, to the height of joy—from weary tossings, to perpetual rest—from busy working, to abundant reward †—from the shameful cross to a glorious crown—from conflicts of sin, to uninterrupted holiness—from persecution by men, to divine approbation and enjoyment—from human intercourse, to converse with angels—from deep disgrace, to highest dignity—from restraint in prison, to present liberty—from rending division, to complete unity—from languishing famine, to a celestial feast—from having nothing, to enjoying all things—from use of means, to the ultimate end—from assaults of temptation, to consolation and joy—from sad desertions, to perpetual fruition—from perplexing fears, to endless peace—from sad diseases, to complete cure—from midnight

* Rom. viii. 28.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 10. Heb. xii. 23. Matt. xxv. 21. Rev. xiv. 13. Luke vi. 35.

ignorance, to glorious light—from shameful pollution, to white robes—from mournful prayers, to joyful praises—from a dark grave, to a celestial paradise—from comforts in time, to endless eternity.

O what a change doth death make! We mortals cannot conceive of it. Study that text, 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." See what diminutives are in the one, and superlatives in the other; affliction in the one, glory in the other; lightness in the one, weight in the other; for a moment in the one, eternal in the other, and a far more and exceeding weight of glory. O what an emphasis there is in the expression! the apostle seems in great want of words to set off the glories above; so shall we be in our highest conceptions. We may quickly lose ourselves in this contemplation; Christ and heaven admit no hyperbole. Let not your spirits droop, "He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry; and when he comes, his reward is with him, and work before him." * "The dead in Christ shall rise first; and they which are alive, and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." †—Amen. So be it.

* Isa. xl. 10. † 1 Thess. iv. 16—18.

MEETNESS FOR HEAVEN,

CONSIDERED IN

Some Brief Meditations

ON THE TWELFTH VERSE, IN THE FIRST CHAPTER OF THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS,

INTENDED FOR A FUNERAL LEGACY.

AN

EPISTLE

To my dearly beloved Hearers, Friends and Neighbours, and others that will be at the cost to buy, or take the pains to read this small Treatise.

Dearly Beloved,

A DESIRE after happiness is so engraven on the nature of man, that it was never made a question whether he was desirous of being happy or not. This needs no proof; all are agreed in this as the end of a rational agent; and therefore at last, *Felicity* was accounted a goddess among the Romans, and St. Augustine tells us, that Lucullus built her a temple; only he wonders that the Romans who were worshippers of so many gods, had not given divine honours to Felicity sooner; which alone would have sufficed instead of all the rest of their deities, which he reckons up, and saith at last of Numa, that having chosen so many gods and goddesses, it is strange he neglected this. But though they at last had got a notion of felicity, yet having no true piety, that veneration ended in the greatest misery and infelicity; nothing but wars ensued.*

This indeed is the case: all men would be happy, but few know the due object and true means leading to happiness. It is possible, (as the same Father saith there) to find a man that is unwilling to be made king; but none that is loth to be made happy.† Indeed most men blunder in the dark, and few find the thing they seek. The same Father tells us,‡ that Varro in his book on Philosophy, who had diligently searched out the various opinions of men respecting the chief good, reduceth

* Vid. Aug. de Civit. Dei, lib. 4. cap. 23.

† Nullus autem invenitur, qui se nolit esse felicem.

‡ De Civ. Dei, lib. 19. cap. 1.

them to two hundred and eighty-eight sects or conclusions; and Augustine reduceth them to their several heads; but I pass by heathens who are bewildered in the dark, and know no better. Even professing or pretended Christians either do not understand, or will not embrace the way of peace and rest. "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. They were all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy, there is none that doth good, no, not one," Psal. xiv. 2, 3. All mankind are originally degenerate; and few are regenerated. We set out for hell as soon as we are born; and till converting grace turn us heaven-wards, we go blindfold to the pit. "The whole world lieth in ignorance and wickedness," 1 John v. 19; but there is no such ignorance as that which is wilful. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil," John iii. 19. No man perisheth but by his own will. Men will sin, and love death rather than life. "You will not come to me, (saith Christ) that you may have life," John v. 40. He that rejecteth the means, rejecteth the end. "All they that hate Christ, love death," Prov. viii. 36; they do both, not directly or designedly, but virtually and consequentially. Most men "observe lying vanities, and so forsake their own mercies," Jonah ii. 8, as he leaves the east who goes to the west. "My people," saith God, "have committed two evils," observe it, it is but one act, yet there are two evils in it, what are they? "they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water," Jer. ii. 13. Oh what evil is in the bowels of one sin! but especially the sin of unbelief. The evil of sin brings on the evil of punishment; miss of heaven, and you arrive at hell. What madman will refuse this gift which is better than gold? what beast will rush down a pit or precipice? But some men make a jest of heaven; as that bishop, who, when one said, I hope to see you at your diocess erelong, replied, "I fear I shall be in heaven before that time come;" others, like Martha, "are so encumbered with the world, that they are pinned down to terrene objects; and answer, as he that being asked, if he saw the eclipse, said, No, I have so

much business on earth, that I have no leisure to look up to heaven: this is most men's case. Alas, the world eats out the religion of many, as the sun shining eats out the fire: so that men are as dead to religion, as if heaven were but a dream; and as active in sin, as if hell had no fire, or were all vanished into smoke. Nay, it is well if some look not on heaven and hell, as if they were but a fable or romance, a scarecrow to frighten weak-headed people, or the mere invention of designing priests to keep men in awe; but they shall know one day to their cost, that there is a heaven by the loss of it, and that there is a hell by its torments; let these ask the rich man in torment, whether there is a hell or not? The Targum saith, the dispute between Cain and Abel was, concerning a world to come; and indeed this is the controversy between the faithful and unbelievers; though the wicked say the creed, wherein they profess a belief of the resurrection, last judgment, and eternal life; yet it is but notional, not experimental, or practical; they know nothing of it initially, or by feeling the beginnings of it here, and living accordingly. It is to be feared that the greatest part of mankind will fall to the devil's share. How little are men concerned about a future state? how many put away from them the evil day? Some have a foolish imagination that heaven is every where; that there is neither heaven nor hell but in a man's own conscience, and then they can shift well enough; for they can shut the mouth of a bawling conscience, and speak peace to themselves; but how long will either of these last? When God arms a man against himself, he will be a *magor-missabib*, a fear round about. Witness Cain and Saul, and Judas too, who thought hell was easier than his own conscience, and therefore desperately leapt into it, to the crushing of his body, and the perdition of his soul. They shall find that there is a heaven and hell after this natural life is ended. It is recorded of Peter Martyr, that he lying upon his deathbed discoursed sweetly on heaven; Bullinger standing by, quoted Phil. iii. 20, "Our conversation is in heaven;" true, said the sick man, it is in heaven, but not in the heaven of Brentius,* which is no where; there is doubtless a *cœlum empyreum*, called a third heaven, or paradise, into which Paul was rapt

* Sed non in cœlo Brentii, quod nusquam est.

in his extacy; into which Christ was carried body and soul; the habitation of God's holiness and glory.* It is true, God himself is called heaven, "the heavens do rule;" and it is as true, "God fills heaven and earth;"† and it is true, where the king is there is the court; but yet God manifests himself far differently in all places; he is in hell by the execution of his justice, in heaven by the manifestation of his grace, on earth by displaying both, and his other glorious attributes, according to his infinite wisdom and pleasure.

But let vain men please themselves with their fond conceits; or desperately leap into the other world, it will be well for you and me duly to weigh the vast difference betwixt graceless and gracious souls in this and in the other world, and though men will not believe, because they see not any such difference, yet a time is coming, "when they shall return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not," Mal. iii. 18; then all the world must be ranked into two regiments, sheep and goats; the one at Christ's right hand, the other on his left; to the one he will say, "Come ye blessed, to the other, go ye cursed," Matt. xxv. 32—46. They that love not to hear discriminating truths here, shall meet with discriminating acts at that day: and can we think that there will be such a difference at that day, and none in this world? no, we cannot, for "though all things come alike to all," as to common providence in this world, Eccl. ix. 2; yet grace makes a difference in persons' dispositions here, and there will be a vast difference in divine dispensations hereafter, much greater than between a man and a brute; yea, like that which is between an angel and a devil. O that men would study and understand this now! Grace makes the difference now, and glory completes it.

1. In point of assimilation. "God's children are like their Father now, but shall be more like him at the last day," 1 John iii. 2. Our former similitude is from faith, and so imperfect; but the latter is from immediate vision, and thus perfect and complete.

2. In point of satisfaction. In this world the weary soul is

* 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4. Luke xxiv. 51. Isa. lxiii. 15.
† Dan. iv. 26. Matt. xxi. 25. Jer. xxiii. 24.

working towards its rest, and doth by faith enter into this rest; yet there is another remaining. Some satisfaction there is in ordinances; but more on that blessed morning, when God's children awake in his likeness.*

3. In point of participation. For God's children are not tantalized, by beholding that to which they have no right; no, they have heaven by appropriation of faith here, so Eph. ii. 6; and by complete possession in the other world, Rev. xxi. 3.

4. In point of fruition. God's children do enjoy fellowship with him already in this world; but alas, "it is only through a glass darkly, but then face to face," or immediately; now it is but rarely, only now and then, but then constantly and perpetually, as "the angels that always behold the face of our Father." Their eye is never off God, even when they are sent on any errands to earth about the saints. It is defective in degree here, but full and complete above. It is often obstructed and obscured here, but above "this glory shall be revealed in us,"† never to be darkened or eclipsed with clouds of interposing guilt.

O ye children of men, prove your Father's will, and yourselves children; secure this inheritance, make no reckoning of the stuff of this world: for the good of the country above is before you, heaven will pay for all your losses, and counterbalance all your disappointments. No matter how your names are written on earth, in dust or marble, if they be written in heaven. Some say this world is but a shadow of that above; look you for the lineaments of that kingdom above, to be pourtrayed on you. Basil asserted one hundred and sixty-five heavens; you must pass by all the fancied heavens of men, "and look for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," Heb. xi. 10; take this kingdom of heaven by violence, Matt. xi. 12. Get a copy of your title out of scripture records, the court rolls of heaven, that you may be sure of it, "and lay hold on eternal life," 1 Tim. vi. 19. Heaven must be begun here, or never enjoyed hereafter. Holiness of heart and life is like the old testament tabernacle, an example and shadow of heavenly things. Happiness is the enjoyment of good, commensurate to our desires; and our desires must be suited to

* Psal. cxvi. 7. Heb. iv. 3, 9 Psal. xxxvi. 8. xvii. 15.
† 1 John i. 3. 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Matt. xviii. 10. Rom. viii. 18.

that happiness. Critics observe, that the word [אשרי] which signifies happiness, is plural; not only denoting a confluence of many good things to make one happy, but because there is a happiness in this life, preparing for and anticipating happiness in another. They differ not in kind but degree; that above is the same state, but more elevated; the same book but in a more correct edition, and a larger character. The saints above differ from us, as a man from a child, as the meridian sun from the morning light; we are in the same house, only they have ascended into the upper room; at the same feast, only they are at the upper end of the table; let us make haste after them; they were once as you are, grovelling on this dunghill, but are exalted to a throne; aspire you to the same preferment: it may be had, it must be had or you are undone. Study the way of God, how this inheritance is made over to the sons of men, and that is—by regeneration—by adoption—by donation —by right of redemption;* and they say, he that hath bought a slave may dispose of him as he please, by his will; our Lord made his will thus, John xvii. 24, "Father, I will that where I am, these may be also." Clear this and clear all, then you are safe; fail in this and you are undone.

But this is not all; you are not only to get and clear up a title to this inheritance, but to press after a due meetness for it, and this is the design of this small Treatise, which was (for the substance of it) preached and written thirty five-years ago, and now revised and published on these considerations:

1. For my own help and furtherance in preparation for heaven, having within a few days, passed to the sixtieth year of my life, the date of the life of Paul the aged; and my Lord only knows how soon my sun may set, though I cannot say, my natural vigour either of body or mind is in the least abated; but I am mortal, and am loth to be surprized unawares.

2. I see a great failure in myself and other Christians who too frequently terminate our studies and endeavours in getting a title, and then think all is well, we need no more; but surely there is much behind; we have abundance of work upon our hands for obtaining *actual* meetness, without which we cannot evidence our *habitual* meetness.

3. I never yet met with any treatise upon this subject,

* Matt. xix. 28. Rom. viii. 17. Luke xii. 32. Eph. i. 14.

though it be of great importance for every Christian; surely heaven is worth minding, and methinks Abraham's query in another case should be ours, Gen. xv. 8, "O Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?"

4. I have observed a commendable practice of some Christians, which is, to order some books to be distributed at their funerals; the first that I knew of that nature, was Mr. R. A's Vindiciæ Pietatis, and some other practical pieces, which by God's blessing have done much good. Such a memorandum would I bequeath as my last legacy to you, my dear people, amongst whom I have laboured above thirty-nine years in public and private, serving the Lord in some measure of integrity and humility, with many tears and temptations, through a variety of dispensations, excommunications, banishments, confiscations and imprisonments; but out of all these the Lord hath delivered me, and set my feet in a large place, and God that searcheth the heart knows what hath been my design in studying, preaching, praying, and preparing for you a place to meet in, to worship God; and what are the agonies and jealousies of my spirit to this day, lest I leave any of you unconverted, and so cashiered from God's presence at the great day; and now at last I solemnly charge you before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that you rest not in a graceless state another day, lest that be the last day, and you be found unready. And I solemnly require of you who have a principle of grace, gird up your loins, trim your lamps, and observe these few rules, and the dispositions mentioned in this small Treatise. I only hint further: be much in the love of God, daily exercise faith on Christ, walk in the Spirit, be solicitous for God's glory, intermit not holy duties, be not content therein without communion with God, mingle religion with civil acts, increase every grace, redeem time, profitably converse with God's children, aim at perfection, maintain tender consciences, keep strict accounts, study the life of heaven, be still doing or getting good, set God before your eyes, trample on worldly things, live in daily view of death, be nothing in your own eyes, be much in heavenly praises; say, "O Lord, who am I, and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? What is man? what am I? the least and worst of the children of men, that the heart of God should be working for me,

and towards me, in the infinite tenderness af eternal love; that the Lord Jesus should shed his heart-blood for me! that the Holy Spirit should take possession of me! that God should provide such an inheritance for me! Assure me of it by precious promises, seal it to me in the holy supper! What am I, that God should ever give me a heart to fear him, heal so many backslidings, prevent total apostacy, pardon all my iniquities, vouchsafe me such valuable privileges, supply my wants, hear my prayers, help me over so many dangerous places in my journey, bring me to the borders of Canaan, give me so many foretastes of the promised land, and tell me the Jordan of death shall be driven back, and that I shall have a safe passage to heaven; O blessed, blessed be God, all this is from sovereign grace; God doth what he pleaseth, I would not exchange this hope for the world's possessions; eternity will be little enough to be taken up in the praises of rich grace." Thus the gracious soul may quickly lose itself in these divine praises and contemplations, as that zealous German martyr, Giles Tirleman, who in his prayers was so ardent, kneeling by himself in some secret place, that he seemed to forget himself; when called many times to meat, he neither heard nor saw them that stood by him, till he was lifted up by the arms, and then gently he would speak to them as one waked out of a deep sleep. O that there were such a spirit in God's children! that our hearts were so intent on things above, as to pass through the world as if unconcerned in it. Then would you be content to leave all, and go to Christ; then would you not be afraid of the king of terrors, though armed with halberts, racks, fires and gibbets; then should you have a brighter crown, and higher degrees of glory, and should shine as the brightness of the firmament; having had the largest capacities on earth, you should have the fullest joys in heaven. I will conclude with the blessed apostle's prayer, 1 Thess. iii. 12, 13, "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men, even as we do towards you; to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." Amen and amen. Thus prayeth,

1690. OLIVER HEYWOOD.

MEETNESS FOR HEAVEN.

Coloss. i. 12.

Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

CHAP. I.

EXPOSITION OF THE TEXT, AND PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

Prayer and praise are the two wings on which a devout soul mounts heaven-wards. Prayer fetcheth down occasions of praise. These two form a medium like post-offices, to maintain intercourse between God and his children. Paul was a great man in both; for, after the inscription, subscription, and benediction in this epistle, he begins to praise, ver. 3, then proceeds to prayer, ver. 9, and in the text he again introduces praise and thanksgiving: wherein observe

The duty, praise; and for what mercy.

In the former, observe the act, *giving thanks*, and the object, *the Father*.

The act, Εὐχαριστοῦντες; it signifies a being of a good temper, having a very grateful disposition, and expressing it in words and actions. Col. iii. 15, "Be ye thankful," or be ye agreeable one to another, or

grateful, both in conferring and receiving benefits: but here it refers to God.

A few introductory observations may be made on the passage.

Obs. 1. That thankfulness is the duty and characteristic of a Christian.

A thankful return for mercies is the study and inquiry of gracious souls, Psalm cxvi. 12. Prayer and thanks are like the double motion of the lungs; the air of mercy that is drawn in by prayer, is breathed out again by the exercise of praise. O happy Christian that can and must "in every thing give thanks!" 1 Thess. v. 18. This, saith Jerome,* is a practice proper for Christians, to be heartily thankful even for crosses, as Job was, chap. i. 21.

Here is also the object of this thankfulness, that is, God, under the notion and relation of a Father: God expresses glory and majesty; Father implies mercy, love, and clemency.

Obs. 2. That it becomes Christians to approach to God as an indulgent Father.

O how much sweetness and endearedness is in this word *Father*! therefore Christ teacheth us to begin our prayers with *Our Father*. This relation quickens our faith, and engages God's love, his care, and his power, and all for his children, Matt. vi. 32. There is comfort in a father, much more in a heavenly Father: evil men may be good fathers, Matt. vii. 11. how much more will a good God be a good Father? None can be so good, and so much a father as he. †

The matter and ground of thankfulness refer to God the Father's care and kindness to all his children. This is twofold:

* Christianorum propria virtus.

† Tam Pater nemo, tam pius nemo.

Providing for them an inheritance, and *preparing them for it.*

First, Providing for all his children an inheritance; wherein are four things to be considered:

The nature of heaven, an *inheritance*;—the quality of it, *in light*;—the inhabitants, *saints*;—their right to it, *partakers*. A word on each of these.

Obs. 3. That God as a Father gives heaven as an inheritance to his children.

Here is the nature of this celestial glory; it is an *inheritance*, partly alluding to Israel's possessing the land of Canaan; partly to signify that it is not given us for our merit, but of his free grace and mercy, therefore called the "reward of the inheritance," Col. iii. 24, because it is conveyed as by a father to his child, of bounty, and not earned as wages by a servant, due from his master.

All God's children are "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," Rom. viii. 17. O happy souls that are heirs to such an inheritance!

Obs. 4. That heaven is a place and state of inexpressible light.

The property or quality of this inheritance is, that it is *in light:* which is meant to describe the light of truth or faith, or that gospel light whereby God's children are savingly enlightened; or else the light of glory, where there is a perfection of illumination and delight, joy and felicity, for God dwelleth in inaccessible light, 1 Tim. vi. 16. "The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof," Rev. xxi. 23.

Obs. 5. That only saints, or sanctified souls, are heirs of heaven.

Here are the proprietors, the owners of this glorious

inheritance, that is, saints, sanctified souls; it is purchased for them, vouchsafed to them only; others have nothing to do with it; no dirty dogs or filthy swine shall trample on this golden pavement; 1 Cor. vi. 9. Rev. xxi. 27. "Without holiness no man shall see God," Heb. xii. 14. No grace, no glory. The inhabitants of that city are called, yea, are really holy, Isa. lxii. 12. But how come they by this high honour? have they a good title to it? I answer, Yes, they are partakers of it; so saith the text, *εἰς τὴν μερίδα τοῦ κλήρου*, either that which falls to them by lot—then it is the decision of heaven, which is connected with having a part, Acts viii. 21; or else by a person's own choice, "which," our Lord saith, "shall not be taken away," Luke x. 42. This may suggest,

Obs. 6. That every saint of God is already partaker of a heavenly inheritance.

"The promise," or the mercy promised, "is sure to all the seed," Rom. iv. 16. Why so? Because it is by grace on God's part, and by faith on ours: and God will have it so of his good pleasure.

A sincere Christian partakes of heaven,

(1.) *In pretio*, in purchase. The price is laid down for it; "it is a purchased possession," Eph. i. 14.

(2.) *In promisso*, it is theirs by promise, as Canaan was Israel's by promise; and that land of promise was a type of this heavenly inheritance, James ii. 5.

(3.) *In capite*; saints partake of heaven by their union to their Head who is in heaven. "God hath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," Eph. ii. 6. O happy souls!

(4.) *In primitiis*, in the first-fruits or earnest. 2 Cor. v. 5, "Who hath also given unto us the earnest of his Spirit." A pledge is restored, but an earnest is retained, because it is part of the bargain. A faith-

ful man will not run back from his bargain, nor lose his earnest: nor will the covenant-keeping God; he is faithful who hath promised, who will also do it.

Secondly, The other branch of the text is not only the providing of an inheritance for his children, but also a preparing of them for that inheritance. Solomon saith, "Wisdom is good with an inheritance," Eccles. vii. 11. Alas, what should a fool do with a great estate? yet it often falls out so, that the worst men have most of the world: but, saith Mr. J. Dalleus on this text, "It is not so here as in worldly things, that fall into the hands of those that are most incapable to improve them aright; but God gives a suitable share of true wisdom with this inheritance," as when Saul was anointed king, he was "turned into another man," 1 Sam. x. 6. Alas, what is heaven to us unless we be fit for it? Our dear Lord Jesus who went to prepare a place for us, must also prepare us for that blessed place. In this second branch we have something implied and something expressed.

(1.) From that which is implied, may arise

Obs. 7. That every soul by nature is altogether unmeet for heaven.

2 Cor. iii. 5, "Not that we are ἱκανοι, sufficient or meet (for it is the same word) of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves." Alas, what merit, either of congruity or condignity, can there be in man to obtain heaven? If he cannot think well, surely he cannot will well, or act well, to deserve or fit himself for such a mercy; especially since man by nature is a child of wrath, a slave of Satan, dead in sins, banished out of paradise, hath no heart to look that way, nay, hath enmity in his mind to what is good. God doth all:* the Sun of Righteousness shines on these de-

* Dignatus est nos assumere.

graded souls; he alone makes vessels of honour: he fills them with the treasures of grace, and fits them for glory: of unfit making them fit, * that is, meet for his glorious presence.

(2.) Here is something expressed, which is held forth in these two observations:—

Obs. 8. That all those, and only those that shall eternally partake of the heavenly inheritance in the other world, are made meet for it in this world.

Obs. 9. That it is a transcendent mercy worth thanking God for, to be made meet for heaven.

Of the two last in their order.

First, *That all those, and only those that shall partake of the heavenly inheritance in the other world, must be made meet for it in this world.*

All that I shall do in the doctrinal part is,

I. To shew what this meetness is; and then,

II. I shall prove the necessity of it.

CHAP. II.

DISTINCTIONS ABOUT MEETNESS FOR HEAVEN—WHAT HABITUAL MEETNESS IS—BOTH RELATIVE AND REAL.

I. For a more methodical proceeding in explaining this subject, I shall premise some *Distinctions*, by which you may understand what meetness for heaven is.

1 *Dist.* There is a legal and evangelical meetness. † Since the fall of man, no mere man can fulfil all righteousness, or by his own power attain to any thing pleasing to God; so a legal meetness is not attainable.

* Inhabiles habiles faciens. † Aptitudo legalis et evangelica.

"We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God." *

2 *Dist.* There is a meetness of works, and of the person. † In the covenant of works, the person was accepted for the works' sake; but in the covenant of grace, the work is accepted for the person's sake. If the person "be accepted in the Beloved," God owns both person and offering, as he did Abel. But what proportion can the best services of the best men bear to an eternal reward? nor can human sufferings purchase this glory to be revealed. ‡

3 *Dist.* There is a perfect, complete meetness for heaven. || This only is attained by "the spirits of just men made perfect:" for who upon earth can say "I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" Alas, we know but in part, and so love but in part. Even Paul who was perfect in point of sincerity, yet was not already perfect in point of degree, but was pressing forward. § Christians here below are but *in via non in patria*, on the road to perfection, singing the song of degrees, and not on the heights of Zion. Sincerity is gospel perfection, and the Christian's preparation, together with a progressive motion.

4 *Dist.* There is an habitual and an actual meetness for heaven; ¶ or, which may be thus distinguished, there is a hereditary right, and an aptitude or actual fitness for this inheritance. My text includes both, and I shall explain both; for they are both necessary in their place; and in this sense God's children are said to be "counted worthy of the kingdom

* Rom. iii. 23, 24. viii. 2, 3, 8. Gal. iii. 10—13.

† Aptitudo operum et personæ.

‡ Eph. i. 6. Heb. xi. 4, 6. Luke xvii. 10. Rom. viii. 18.

|| Aptitudo perfecta et progressiva.

§ Heb. xii. 23. Prov. xx. 9. 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Phil. iii. 12—15.

¶ Aptitudo habitualis et actualis.

of God," 2 Thess. i. 5; and saith Christ, "They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy," Rev. iii. 4; and therefore are we exhorted to "walk worthy of God, who hath called us into his kingdom and glory," 1 Thess. ii. 12. It imports a conveniency, suitableness, or answerablenes in a limited gospel sense; like children of such a father, as heirs of such an inheritance, as candidates for such an office and honour. There is a (τὸ πρέπον) becomingness appertaining to every calling; princes, magistrates, ministers, must have an adaptation and suitableness to their profession; so here.

Well then, I shall speak particularly of this twofold meetness. First, of an habitual meetness, which is in opposition to perfect unmeetness, that is, a state of nature, or unregeneracy; and secondly, of an actual meetness, which is contra-distinct from imperfect meetness; and both are necessary.

If you inquire, what is that habitual meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light, without which men can never attain to it, or have eternal possession of it?

I answer, This habitual meetness consists in a twofold change, *relative* and *real*.

1. It consists in a relative change: this also is twofold, namely in justification and adoption.

(1.) The poor sinner is standing at God's bar as a guilty malefactor, under the dreadful sentence of a just condemnation, "for all the world is become guilty," ὑπόδικος subject to judgment before God," Rom. iii. 19. Not a son of Adam can plead innocence; it is well if we be as the blushing rose, the lily-whiteness is lost. "He that believeth not is condemned already," John iii. 18, "and the wrath of God abideth on him," ver. 36; it was on him when he was born, and it abides

still on him, if not taken off from him by justification. Who can think the prince will promote *him* to honour who is under an attainder for treason? He must be cleared of that charge, or he is fitter for execution than promotion; pardon must precede preferment. You must be first in Christ Jesus, and then "there is no condemnation to you," Rom. viii. 1. You must be received into favour before you be promoted to honour. The sinner must be justified before he can be glorified, Rom. viii. 30. Never think of ascending to heavenly glory under a load of guilt; that guilt will shut heaven's gates against thee. The guilt of one sin will bear down a soul, yea, millions of souls to hell; for "the wages of sin is death;" O therefore, what need is there of justification as an introduction to salvation? "You must be justified by his grace, if ever you be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Never think your sins will be blotted out in the day of refreshing, except you repent here and be converted; you must be "justified by faith that you may have peace with God here, and so rejoice in hope of the glory of God."* You cannot think to leap from the bar to the throne; but you must be cleared by order of justice, through Christ's satisfaction in the court of God. This, this is absolutely necessary to a meetness for this heavenly inheritance.

(2.) Adoption. This is another relative change. Alas, by nature we have quite lost our relationship, and so forfeited our filial right to the heavenly inheritance. We are *exules a regno*, banished out of paradise, and there are placed cherubim, "and a flaming sword, which turns every way to keep the way of the tree of life," Gen. iii. 24. Yea, we are voluntarily gone into a far country, have wasted our substance, disowned

* Rom. vi. 23. Tit. iii. 7. Acts iii. 19. Rom. v. 1, 2.

our father's house, are feeding swinish appetites, and feeding ourselves with the poor husks of worldly things; and till we be adopted and admitted again into our father's house, we are not fit to eat the children's bread, or heir the child's inheritance. But God himself hath contrived a way how to settle the best inheritance on such as he finds strangers; Jer. iii. 19, "I said, how shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? then I said thou shalt call me, My father, and shalt not turn away from me." O blessed contrivance! and will any think to cross God's plan? Shall men's folly challenge infinite wisdom? is not the heavenly inheritance God's own to give? and doth not our Lord, say, "such honour shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father?" Matt. xx. 23. Can you think to wrest heaven out of God's hands whether he will or not? and must he falsify his word to gratify you? Will he set the crown on a rebel's head? or give this inheritance of saints to the devil's slaves? No, doubtless you must be adopted sons, or no lawful heirs. Bastards heir no land. Jephthah's brethren thrust him out, saying, "Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house, for thou art the son of a strange woman, Judg. xi. 2. And what bold intruder art thou, who darest expect to claim such an inheritance as heaven without the relation of a son? Adam it is true, was God's son by creation; but alas, he and we in him have quite lost that sweet relation; and we must either be restored in Christ, God's well beloved Son, or we are like to be banished for ever. "God sent his own Son, that through him we might receive the adoption of sons;" and have you the Spirit of his Son in your hearts, to cry, Abba Father? which elsewhere is called "the spirit of adoption." Tell me not that all

are the sons of God; so were the devils. God will make you know that this is a peculiar privilege, known to very few, enjoyed by fewer; it is the fruit of special love, and is attended with this unparalleled advantage of seeing God as he is; and a day is coming when these sons and heirs in disguise shall then be like their Father;* then atheists that will not believe that there is any such difference among men, and bold intruders, that dreamed of a right, without pretending or proving their adoption, shall be utterly confounded.

2. But besides this relative change, there is also a real change upon those souls that God makes meet for heaven, and this consists in *conversion to God*, and *covenanting with him*.

(1.) Conversion to God. This is expressed in the words immediately following my text, ver. 13, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." This is a description of conversion, and a preparation for glory; compare this with Acts xxvi. 18; see there the privilege annexed. Observe it, conversion makes saints, and only saints are partakers of this inheritance. If all the men on earth, and angels in heaven, should join their energies together, they could not save one unconverted soul; truth itself hath asserted it with a solemn asseveration, Matt. xviii. 3, "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." The like doth the same infallible speaker assert with a fourfold asseveration, John iii. 3, 5. I wonder often how careless sinners who are conscious to themselves that never any such work has passed on them, can eat and drink, or sleep quietly, and never so much as ask this question, am I converted or am I not? if I be, when or

* Gal. iv. 5, 6. Rom. viii. 15. 1 John iii. 1, 2.

how did my soul pass through the change of a new birth? What tears and apprehensions, what groans and agonies hath it cost me? What fruits hath it brought forth in me? Where is this new creature, the divine nature, the image and seed of God rising heaven-wards? What stamp, what sheep-mark can I shew, as evidence of God's being at work on my soul, and as an earnest of a glorious inheritance? But if there be no such change, (as I doubt there is not) how can I be at rest? Sure my pillow is soft, or my heart hard, and my conscience seared, when I can quietly hear or read my own doom in such a scripture, from the mouth of the Judge himself, standing at heaven's gates and shutting me out, as if he named me, saying, Be gone, thou unconverted sinner, I know thee not; converting grace never changed thy heart or life; though I often summoned thee, and knocked at thy door, yet thou hadst no heart or desire to turn from thy sinful ways, nor so much as fall down on thy knees, and ask this grace of conversion of me, or use the means for it, or so much as examine whether thou hadst it or not, but wentest on in a golden dream, and now I must tell thee roundly to thy cost, depart, be gone from my presence, thou poor, wretched, undone sinner; this state, this place is for none but sincere converts.

(2.) Covenanting with God. When the glorious day of our Lord's appearing shall arrive, he calls forth his covenanted people, to crown his gracious promises with complete performance, Psal. l. 5, "Gather my saints together, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice;" as if he had said, I take little notice of common or outside worshippers, they shall be set on my left hand; but there are amongst you some serious souls that look beyond the ordinance; I have observed them, they have solemnly devoted themselves

to me, and accepted me in a covenant way. These, these are the persons, and these only, that I have taken for the lot of my inheritance, and for whom I have laid up a safe and satisfying portion: but to the uncovenanted soul, or hypocritical pretender to a covenant engagement, God will say, "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" Psal. l. 16. What ground hast thou to own me; or to claim any thing from me for this world or another? Man as a creature can have no intercourse with God, but in a covenant way; much less can a sinner expect any good from God, but by virtue of a covenant. But what canst thou say about this promised inheritance, who hast nothing to do with the promises? "For all the promises of God, in Christ are yea and amen," 2 Cor. i. 20. But thou hast never spent one hour solemnly to review and renew thy baptismal covenant, and engage thy soul to God; and since thou art an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and a stranger from the covenant of promise, by consequence thou art without Christ, and without God in this world, and therefore without hope of a better state in the other world, Eph. ii. 12. But strangers and foreigners, along with the saints, become fellow-citizens of the new Jerusalem, ver. 19. How is that? Doubtless by taking the sacred oath of fealty and allegiance to the king of heaven. By covenant you have a title to all the good things of earth and heaven. Sinner think of this, thou that lovest to be loose, and scornest the fetters of this holy league; thou dost in effect say, I will have none of God, Christ, pardon, or heaven: if I must have them on no other terms than under such bonds and obligations, let them take this heavenly inheritance for me. And dost thou think this golden chain of honour

worse than the devil's iron fetters of sin, and dismal rewards of flames and torments? If you need not God and heaven, be it known to you, God needs not you; but can distrain for a revenue of glory to his justice in your necessary confusion, because you would not voluntarily submit to his terms for so glorious an inheritance.

CHAP. III.

WHAT ACTUAL MEETNESS FOR HEAVEN IS IN THE EXERCISE OF CHRISTIAN GRACES?

SECONDLY, The next general topic on which I am to treat, is to ascertain what is the soul's actual meetness for this glorious inheritance, supposing the existence of the aforesaid habitual meetness, both relative and real. For all a Christian's work is not done when his state is changed, and he becomes a convert or saint; nay, his work doth but now begin as a saint, to obtain an actual meetness for glory. This, this is the business of a child of God: the former hath a remote meetness; this produces a proximate or nearer capacity for heaven. The former renders the Christian's state safe, this pleasant and comfortable. This is the man that hath set all things in order for another world, that hath nothing to do, but to pass over the Jordan of death into the Canaan of heaven; this is the man that is in the best sense meet for heaven, fit to take his flight into another world. Interpreters think this word ἱκανος, sufficient, or meet, answers to the Hebrew word די, *dai*, Lev. xii. 8, "If she be not able to bring a lamb:" in the Hebrew, thus, "If her hand find not

sufficiency of a lamb." The word is attributed to God, who is, אל שדי, "God all-sufficient," Gen. xvii. 1. But as God is sufficient and adequate to the circumstances of all his creatures, so by the same almighty grace he will make creatures adapted to his mind and purposes. So then this word is rather to be rendered by *idoneus*, meet, than *dignus*, worthy; yet worthy in a gospel, qualified sense. Observe it, those judge themselves most unworthy, whom God and man oft judge most fit and worthy, Luke vii. 4; they said, "he is worthy for whom he should do this;" but verse 6, himself saith, "I am not worthy thou shouldst enter under my roof." And thus it is with a gracious soul, looking up and seeing the holiness of God's infinite majesty; looking forward and beholding the momentous duration of eternity and purity of heaven; looking inward and backward, and seeing his many iniquities and great deformity. Oh, cries the sensible Christian, Who is fit for heaven? O how unmeet am I for this glorious state, this high honour? It is true, but grace makes of rebels, subjects; of subjects, servants; of servants, sons; of sons, heirs; of heirs he so disposeth and qualifieth them, that nothing will content them beneath this inheritance of the saints in light; and their spirits shall be so adapted to it, that the great God will judge them "worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead, and equal to angels, as being the children of God, and the children of the resurrection:" see Luke xx. 35, 36. As the Christian by conversion is a man cut out for heaven, so while he lives he is and must be still squaring, hammering, planing, and increasing his meetness for it; and as God is said to work us for the self-same thing, 2 Cor. v. 5, κατεργασάμενος, by curious modes of efficacious grace, to put sinners into a capacity for glory; as goldsmiths

who burnish gold; and carvers or artificial engravers in wood and stone, who make one part of their work fit another. So also Christians themselves must "work out their own salvation," Phil. ii. 12, κατεργάζεσθε, that is, leave nothing undone which God hath enjoined you to do in this world, in order to a due preparation for heaven. This in general is a meetness.

More particularly, this actual meetness for heaven consists in these four things:—A lively exercise of suitable graces—A clear evidence of our spiritual state —A despatching of work from our hands—A being mortified to time, and longing to be in heaven.

1. A lively exercise of suitable graces: that is, such graces as actually capacitate for glory; it is true every grace doth qualify for glory, for grace is glory begun, and glory is grace consummated. But there are some graces that have a direct tendency to this point, and whereby a Christian doth, as it were, "lay hold on eternal life," as the word is, 1 Tim. vi. 12, 19, for example,

(1.) The grace of faith, which "is the substance of things hoped for, and evidence of things not seen," Heb. xi. 1. It ventures all upon a promise; "sees him that is invisible," verse 27, and represents heavenly objects as close at hand, "and embraceth them," verse 13, ἀσπασάμενοι, drawing the objects to them, as the word signifies. Overlooking or overcoming all these worldly, visible things, faith spies something beyond time or clouds, of more worth than all the world, and hazards all for the obtaining of it. When faith is upon the wing, it soars above the sun, and fetcheth down heavenly realities and incomes into the soul. It acts the part of the spies, and brings a cluster of the grapes of Canaan; even "joy and peace in believing;" yea, "joy unspeakable and full of glory;"

even, when the actings of the faith of adherence are the very lowest the Christian dares commit the keeping of his soul into his Creator's hands; and is persuaded, that "God will keep that which he hath committed to him."* And this composedness is an antedating of heaven. Alas, saith he, I know not certainly how I stand for heaven; I dare not yet say my faith will end in the saving of my soul; but this I dare say, God is merciful to souls; Christ died for sinners; he is faithful that hath promised; the covenant is well ordered and sure, some souls shall be saved, and why not I? I hang on his free grace, I come with tears in my eyes, confession in my mouth, grief in my heart for my sins; I am weary of my burden, and labour in my progress God-wards, who can tell but I may find rest? He hath said, "those that thus come to him he will in no wise cast out;" I will venture this way; I have tried all other ways, but they are vain; it is but losing my labour, which I am sure I shall not, if my faith be but sincere. This soul is on the confines of the promised land; and is meet for this inheritance.

(2.) Hope. As faith brought heaven down to the soul's eye, so hope carries out the soul to this future enjoyment. This anchor is cast into the vast ocean of eternity, but finds sure anchor-hold, for it "enters into that within the veil," Heb. vi. 19. The believer sees heaven opened, and himself in God's time advanced with Lazarus into Abraham's bosom, and is content at present to bear the roughness and affronts he meets with in his way, saying, these things will be mended when I get home. Nay, the scripture saith, "we are saved by hope," Rom. viii. 24. Hope anticipates what is in reversion, and like a young heir takes up

* Rom. xv. 13. 1 Pet. i. 8. iv. 19. 2 Tim. i. 12.

upon trust, and lives as an expectant of that inheritance to which he is heir. Thus the Christian gets everlasting consolation, because "he hath a good hope through grace," 2 Thess. ii. 16. O, saith the believer, divine revelation hath so fully demonstrated the reality of future glory, that my faith no more doubts of it than of going to bed at night, and why should not "my flesh and spirit rest in hope?" Psal. xvi. 9. Why should not then my heart be glad? Why may not my glory rejoice? Yes, "I will rejoice in hope of the glory of God, for my hope will not make me ashamed," Rom. v. 2, 5. I dare venture my hopes and my all on this blessed covenant bottom. "My soul, hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, and that for ever," Psal. xlii. 11.

(3.) Love. That is a grace that shines brightest in its proper sphere above; but the more it is exercised here below, the more of heaven. Love assimilates the soul most to God, and raiseth it to a heavenly life. "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him," 1 John iv. 16. The soul that is carried out to God in a pure flame of holy love, hath mounted already into the highest region, and bathes itself in those pure streams which cheer and transport the spirit into a continued ecstacy. The more love, the more preparedness for heaven. "If love be increased and abound, our hearts will be established unblameable—at his coming," 1 Thess. iii. 12, 13. Yea, the more love, the more of heaven; for what is our love, but a reflexion of God's love? 1 John iv. 19. O, saith the Christian, I feel the sacred beams of the Sun of Righteousness warming my heart; methinks those heavenly emanations have set me in a flame, and while I am musing, the fire burns; when I am praying or praising God, my soul mounts

up to my Lord as pillars of smoke; I love to be near him, and to be acting for him. O how sweet is every intimation of his favour! How delightful are some tokens of love that come from the hand and heart of my beloved! Here is the soul that is meet for heaven.

(4.) Humility and self-denial. Will you believe it? The lower the Christian casts himself down, the nearer heaven; but this is a truth, Matt. v. 3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." God makes his abode with the humble and contrite spirit, Isa. lvii. 15. O, saith the Christian, this grace have I found in me, that duty is performed by me, this corruption have I mortified, that burden have I borne; what do I say? I have done this or that; O no, "by the grace of God, I am what I am—I laboured, yet not I, but the grace of God," 1 Cor. xv. 10. I dare not say any thing is my own but sin; and what is performed by me is mixt with imperfection. I tremble for fear, saith Luther, at any thing that is of myself.* I must not depend on mine own righteousness; O that I may be found in Christ! I am nothing, can do nothing, deserve nothing but death and hell. If ever I be admitted into heaven, it must be on account of Christ, his merits upon the cross, and his intercession in heaven. That is an excellent text, Rev. xix. 7, 8, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready;" but how is she ready? why, "to her was granted, that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." Indeed it is no other than Christ's righteousness imputed; this is the upper garment that must not only cover our nakedness, but the tattered rags of

* Horreo quicquid de meo est.

our own righteousness. Whether that relate to a glorious state of the church on earth or in heaven, I dispute not; but I am sure it is the finest suit that she can put on, she will look well in that only; and woe to them that appear in their best inherent righteousness. Let the proud self-justiciary say, I will not have heaven gratis,* or for nothing, I will pay a proportionable rate for it; then thou art like to go without it, for it is not saleable ware, Rom. ix. 31. But let a poor self-condemning publican come and beg pardon and heaven for Christ's sake, and God will not deny him: "for he resisteth the proud, but giveth grace and glory to the humble," James iv. 6.

CHAP. IV.

MEETNESS FOR HEAVEN, IN CLEAR EVIDENCES OF TITLE TO IT.

2. THE next particular wherein a meetness for heaven doth consist, is assurance, or unquestionable evidence of our title to the happiness above; for none is ready to go out of this world, but he hath solid grounds of his safety with respect to another; for doubts create fears, and those fears produce unwillingness to go hence: he dares not die who knows not whither he must go, and he is not meet for heaven, who hath not used God's appointed means to obtain assurance; a thousand to one a soul at uncertainties hath been a slothful, negligent soul; as in a usual way, diligence begets assurance: for so saith the apostle, Heb. vi. 11, 12, "We desire that every

* Cœlum gratis non accipiam.

one of you would shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope to the end; that ye be not slothful." So 2 Pet. i. 10, "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure;" and what then? why then, ver. 11, he adds, "For so an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." A ship may make a hard shift to get disabled into the harbour, with anchors lost, cables rent, sails torn, masts broken; she gets safe in, but with much difficulty; whereas, how gallantly, doth another ride in, to the credit of her master, for a good example to others, and comfort and satisfaction to all in the ship; when she arrives with sails spread, streamers flying, trumpets sounding, and well victualled: surely these come in bravely. This is just the difference betweeen an indolent professor that wants assurance, and an active Christian in his voyage to the blessed haven. God requires this assurance; means are appointed for attaining it; serious Christians have gained it, so mayest thou, and so must thou endeavour after it. You will say, how is it obtained? By what means may a Christian come to the assurance of his title to this heavenly inheritance, that he may be meet or prepared to take possession of it at death?

I answer, in general it must be supposed that you have a title, which is your habitual meetness, or else how can you be assured of it? You that are unregenerate, you have a greater change to pass through before you are capable of obtaining assurance. But supposing this, the following may be regarded as means:

(1.) A holy diligence in increasing, and exercising graces, and in the performance of duty. This I hinted before: acts evidence habits; improving grace is God's

way to clear up grace; blowing up sparks will best discover them; a flame is sooner discerned than a spark in the embers; Christians by stirring up the gift of God become sensible of it, 2 Tim. i. 6. Motion is a good evidence of life; activity for God, and tendency heaven-ward will put you out of doubt. All duties tend to assurance, or spring from it; striving, running, and fighting will be crowned with clear evidence; God loves to reward diligence. To him that hath, that is, useth and improveth well what he hath, shall be given, and he shall have abundance, that is, more grace and the comfort of it; as the collision of of flint and steel begets light, so the acting of grace produces this fruit, namely, assurance. "For the work of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever," Isa. xxxii. 17. Now, now, the Christian is ready for glory, when he is in duty, above duty, with God in the lively actings of grace, which is a part of, and a prologue to glory. He is going from strength to strength, till he appear before God in Zion. O happy soul that is thus upon the wing!

(2.) Reflection upon heart and life, and comparing both with the word of God. This is God's way to gain assurance: have I the conditions of gospel promises, faith and repentance? Do those graces within me answer the characters of such in the scriptures? Doth my soul feel what corresponds with the experience of saints in the word of God? Can I follow the rules and prescriptions that my Lord hath laid down, "To deny myself, take up my cross and follow him?" Have I the essential characteristics of a Christian? I dare not believe Satan or my own treacherous heart; I will examine and prove myself, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. I will not spare myself in any thing, I will be impartial, and

deal faithfully by a severe trial now, as I would be found in the decisive trial at the last day; it is a matter of life and death; I will lay judgment to the line; I will go to the law and to the testimony; the word must judge me at the great day, it shall be my judge now. No matter what the world saith of me, nor must I be determined by the votes of the best Christians, or pious ministers: I must, and will, and do "prove mine own work, and then I shall have rejoicing in myself alone, and not in another," Gal. vi. 4.

(3.) Appealing and approving the heart to God. Alas, the best Christian is too apt to be partial in his own case, or blind at home; our minds are placed as our eyes, neither of them apt to look inwards; and when we do look, alas, we are apt to look through a false or flattering glass, or our eye is vitiated with bad humours; and therefore must we with Job appeal to God, chap. x. 7, "Thou knowest that I am not wicked." And chap. xxiii. 10, "He knoweth the way that I take." And though David "had communed with his own heart, and his spirit had made diligent search," Psal. lxxvii. 6; yet he requests God to make a further investigation: Psal. xxvi. 2, "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins, and my heart." And again, Psal. cxxxix. 23, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts." Not as though God were ignorant of them till he had searched, but it is spoken after the manner of men; and that God might further acquaint David with the secrets of his heart. Thus the sincere Christian saith, Lord, I set myself before thee as a glass in the sun; look upon me, look through me; thou knowest all things, see how my heart is affected towards thee; discover to me the inmost workings of my soul; if there be any secret guile wrapping itself up in the

lurking places of my heart, bring it to light; if there be any flaw in my evidences, let me see it before it be too late; I am too apt, through self-love, to judge the best, but do thou declare my state and my frame as it is: thou that must be my judge shalt be my witness. "My witness is in heaven, and my record is on high," Job xvi. 19. Here is a soul usually comforted in his integrity, and such a one is meet for heaven.

(4.) Praying to God for the illumination and sealing of his Spirit. For indeed let all these means be used, yet evidence will not appear unless God be pleased to shine upon his own grace in the soul. "My conscience," saith Paul, "bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost," Rom. ix. 1, and Rom. viii. 16, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." This indeed is sun-light assurance. This alone scatters all mists, answers all objections, banishes all doubts and fears; and O what an honour and satisfaction is it to a child of God, that the third person of the sacred Trinity should come down and give his infallible testimony at the bar of a believer's conscience! This is like the Son of God coming down to assume our nature, and to die for us. O transcendent condescension! O unparalleled privilege of God's children! Yet this is purchased by Christ, and promised to believers, not only to be a witness, but a seal.* This is often, yea ordinarily given after believing; and when it comes, it brings its own evidence along with it; so that the perplexed child of God, after many sore conflicts, strugglings, efforts, and sad thoughts of heart, comes at last to some stability, so as to expel cares, fears, and doubts, and now at last is brought to this, that he no more questions God's love than his faithfulness; and this usually

* 2 Cor. i. 22. v. 5. Eph. i. 13.

takes place after some extraordinary wrestlings at the throne of grace in prayer, according to that John xvi. 24, "Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name:" that is, very little comparatively. "Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." God will have his children to beg when he designs to give, to exercise our obedience, and to honour his own ordinance. Then he gives assurance, and the joy of his salvation; and now the believer is meet to be translated into the joy of his Lord.

But you will say, are none meet for heaven but such as have assurance? Then what shall a poor doubting soul say of itself, when dark, and much discouraged as many are?

Answ. (1.) A title to this inheritance is necessary, but knowledge of this title is not absolutely necessary. Many have died safely, though under clouds. Our Lord himself cried, in his dying moments, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" There was relation, *my God*, yet in some sense he was forsaken.

(2.) There are degrees of assurance; accordingly one said, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." Few enjoy a full assurance, and those that have it, yet have it not at all times. Mr. Paul Bains said, dying, "Sustentation I have, but suavities spiritual I do not feel."

(3.) What God doth in a sovereign way, when he suspends the comforts of his Spirit from the best of his saints, is one thing; and what may be, and usually is, the effect of man's sloth and negligence, and which is too commonly our case, is another; as Mr. Dodd answered him that complained of want of assurance, "why, man, assurance may be had, and what have you been doing all this while?"

(4.) Yet this will hold good, that a clear evidence of

our title is a great meetness and readiness for death; for though assurance be not necessary [*ad esse*] to the being of a Christian; yet it is necessary [*ad bene esse*] to his well-being, or comfortable passage through, or departure out of this world; for if we must draw near to God in duty with full assurance of faith, Heb. x. 22, much more at death.

O what a vast difference there is between a soul carried upon the wing of faith, in an ecstacy of joy, and the poor doubting, heartless, disconsolate soul! The former is like some high mountains, that are above storms and clouds, as they say Olympus is clear and beautiful. O the calmness and serenity of the well assured Christian! He hath a double heaven, well at present, better presently; it is but shooting this gulf, crossing this Jordan, passing this stile, as Dr. Taylor said, "and I shall be in my Father's house." Death itself, as terrible as it is in itself and to others, is a stingless serpent, my friend and father's servant sent to fetch me home; angels shall guard me, my Lord will bid me welcome, my christian friends gone before will make heaven ring with shouts of joy at my landing safe, and my soul shall ever be with the Lord. But alas, the poor doubting soul, whose evidences are not clear, cries out, alas, die I must, and die I dare not, I dare not say, God is my God, Christ is my Saviour, the Spirit my sanctifier, promises forming the charter that conveys an inheritance to others I cannot apply; whither I am going I know not; God conducts himself strangely towards me; I remember God and am troubled, guilt stares me in the face, I am conscious to myself of thousands of sins, and though I have been long trying to exercise faith and repentance, yet I am not sure they are sincere and saving, or whether God will receive my mournful departing soul: as a

great man said, I have lived under fears, I die under doubts,* and God knows what will become of me, I may however thank myself; alas, this is the fruit of my sloth, my security, my slipping into sin, backslidings from God, intermissions of duty, careless and heartless performances; woe is me, what will become of me! These are the overwhelming thoughts of a poor doubtful, dying soul. And is this man meet for heaven? He may be right for the main, but he cannot make death welcome.

CHAP. V.

MEETNESS FOR HEAVEN CONSISTING IN THE DISCHARGE OF WHAT IS INCUMBENT UPON US.

3. THE next thing wherein our meetness for this blessed inheritance doth consist, is in despatching the main work which God sent us to do in the world; whatever that is, God expects that we should be performing it, and get it done; this we must all apply ourselves cheerfully to do, and be very diligent in doing it, Eccl. ix. 10, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." This only is the time of working, the future, beyond the grave, is a day of retribution; and when the child of God hath wrought his day's work, he goes to sleep in the dust: thus our dear Lord tells his father, John xvii. 4, 5, "I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do; and now O, Father, glorify me with thy own self."

* Anxius vixi, dubius morior.

But you may say, What work is it that God sets before men to perform?

I answer, There is a fourfold work upon a Christian's hands in this world.

(1.) Personal, spiritual work, soul work, wherein God is more immediately concerned; which is the glorifying of God, and saving of the soul; God hath combined these, they are inseparable, and it is a mighty business. Our Lord saith, "I have glorified thee on the earth;" this in our measure is required of us, and the sincere Christian makes it his design. Thou knowest, O my dear Lord, what that is which hath lain nearest my heart ever since thou openedst mine eyes: the earnest desire of my soul hath been to be nothing in mine own eyes, that God alone may have all the glory; I will confess and give glory to God; I resolve to do this, and through grace have desired, to make it my business to give glory to God by believing, repenting, obeying, fruit-bearing; yea, in eating, drinking, and whatsoever I do in natural, moral or civil actions. This, this is the mark I have in view, my highest aim, "that God in all things may be glorified, through Jesus Christ;" and my business is in order thereto, to study how to "please God, and to abound more and more;" to obey God's commandments, and to do those things that are pleasing in his sight;* and O that my person and prayers might be accepted in Christ! The salvation of my soul is more dear and precious than this poor, perishing frame. My grand inquiry is, what must I do to be saved? this is the one thing needful, other things are bye the bye. O that I could work out my own salvation! I appeal to thee, Lord, how many griefs and groans, tears and prayers, pains and fears, this main concern hath cost me: I know there is much

* 1 Pet. iv. 11. 1 Thess. iv. 1. 1 John iii. 22.

of this work about my precious soul yet undone; but thou knowest the chief is despatched. "I have fought a good fight, finished my course, kept the faith," 2 Tim. iv. 7; and now my land business is done, let me go to sea, and launch out into that boundless ocean of eternal happiness.

(2.) Temporal work, the business of our callings and particular occasions. This also the dying Christian is drawing into a narrower compass, that he may voluntarily leave the world, before the world leave him. The Christian having had his head and hands full of business in his younger days, when old age comes, is glad of a writ of ease, that he may be at more leisure for God in holy duties. Methinks, saith the believer, I have had my share, both of the employments and enjoyments of this lower world, and am well content to shake hands therewith. I can behold with pity the laborious ants running upon this mole-hill, and busily scrambling for a little dust; let them take it, God hath made my hands to be sufficient for me; I have what will bear my charges to the grave; let it go, I am glad I have so fairly parted with it; I would not be called to enter again upon this busy stage, or put forth to this tumultuous sea; I have now other things to mind; I have now the great work of setting straight my accounts for another world to engage my attention, my peace to make with God, an eternity to provide for, which the affairs of the world have thrust out, or distracted me in. This shall be my employment for the future; "for what will it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" I leave all temporal things to others that succeed me.

(3.) Relative work. This also may be in some respects despatched from our hands; and the doing of it maketh more meet for heaven. This is not to be

slighted, for it is needful in its place. When king Hezekiah was sick unto death, God sends him this message, "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live," Isa. xxxviii. 1, that is, make thy will, and dispose of thy domestic concerns, so as to prevent quarrels and contentions in thy family after thy decease; and ver. 3, it is said, that Hezekiah wept sore; why so? was not Hezekiah a pious man? was not his soul in readiness for death? Yes, doubtless, for he dared appeal to God that he had walked before him in truth, and with a perfect heart. What then was the matter? Why, Hezekiah had yet no son, Manasseh being not born till three years after this, as if he had said, Lord, if it may be thy will, spare my life, and give me a son, for if I die at this time, I know not how to dispose of the crown, I am likely to leave the church and state in miserable distraction and confusion, through the great uncertainty of a succession, and the proneness of the people to backslide to their false worship. God heard his prayer, gave him a lease of his life for fifteen years. This is the duty of all, though it be more necessary to some than to others. In every case it is useful to tranquillize the mind, and to prevent outward ill consequences, and inward disturbances of spirit; but as that good man was loth to go off the stage heirless, so other circumstances may particularly call for the settlement of families by a last will and testament; especially when children are left young, &c. Others also may say, now God hath lengthened out my days to see my children brought up, and hopeful for religion, settled in callings and families; there was but this child, or that business that I desired to see well circumstanced, as to my family affairs; as Jacob closed up his blessing of Dan, Gen. xlix. 18, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord;" now at last, since God hath wrought on

such a child, I will say with old Simeon, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation," Luke ii. 29, 30.

(4.) Another work to be disposed of, may be of a public nature. This especially concerns men in a public capacity; as when Moses had led Israel out of Egypt, and through the wilderness, he had despatched his work, and having been faithful in God's house he was prepared to die. So when Joshua had conquered many kings in Canaan, divided the land to Israel, he obtained a discharge and fell asleep. Thus David, "after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers," Acts xiii. 36. And so Aaron, Samuel, and the rest of the prophets, marched off the field by the order of our great Lord General, when they had despatched their warfare, and delivered their message. "Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets do they live for ever?" Zech. i. 5. And indeed to what purpose should they or we live, when our work is done? especially when God's servants have not only despatched that work that concerns present, but future generations; for this is also the work of our present day. Thus Solomon built God a house for future times: and the apostle Peter lays in for after ages, 2 Pet. i. 15, "Moreover, I will endeavour that you may be able after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance." It is the property of a good man to take care that religion may live when he is dead. Ambrose saith of Theodosius, I loved him exceedingly, who when he died was more solicitous for the church's than his own danger. Then indeed is the Christian meet for heaven when he hath despatched his work on earth, and laid a foundation for good in after times.

But you will say, how can any man be said to despatch his work till his life be done? Surely work and life, as to their date, run parallel.

Answ. (1.) What is active, may be oft at an end, when what is to suffer is but beginning; for God often reserves suffering to the last, that patience may have her perfect work, that the Christian may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing, James i. 4. The Christian then hath little to do, but patiently wait God's pleasure; and this usually follows on doing God's will: see Heb. x. 36. It is indeed a great thing to bear our burden patiently, cheerfully, thankfully, and usefully; and say, well for the present, and better shortly; the greatest part is over.

(2.) Though something be still to be done or suffered, yet when the greatest part of a Christian's work is done, it may be said to be finished. So it was with our Saviour, John xvii. 4, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." But was not dying upon the cross for the sins of men a principal part of Christ's work? Yes, only it was so nigh, that he speaks of it as already done; so verse 11, "I am not in the world;" for he was just going out of it. Besides, he had done most of his work, and was straitened to do fully the rest that was behind: "And when our Lord had tasted the vinegar, he said, it is finished," John xix. 30. This is a closing word, as giving up the ghost was a closing work.

(3.) Sometimes divine providence takes off God's children from much of their work before their days be ended. It is obvious to a rational eye that then their work is done: sometimes it takes place by natural causes; thus Isaac and Jacob could presage their own death by a certain prognostic, namely, old age: some are cut off by sickness or consumptions, which are

usually mortal; others are taken from most of their work by persecutions, prisons, &c.; and others are removed from the stage of the world by violent death. As a dying minister said on the scaffold, "Isaac was old and knew not the day of his death, I am young, and know the day, manner, and instruments of my death: it is but a nodding the head, and death doth its office. Now my work is ended."

(4.) Yet once more: some godly ministers and Christians have had a kind of presentiment, that death was approaching even when enjoying the best health and in their younger days; and so consequently of the despatch of their work; as some creatures by natural instinct foresee a falling house. So we read of bishop Jewel, that long before his sickness he foretold it approaching, and in his sickness, the precise day of his death; he died in the fiftieth year of his age. The like we have been informed of James Andreas, who foretold the year, yea, hour of his death. I shall add but another instance of a holy man of God, my dear friend, Mr. Isaac Ambrose: his surviving wife told me of the solemn farewell he gave to his daughter, and some other friends. Yea, the very day of his death several friends from Garstang visited him at Preston, with whom he discoursed piously and cheerfully, telling them he had finished his work, having the night before sent his discourse on "Angels" to the Press, he attended them to their horses, returned, and died that evening in his parlour, where he had shut himself up for meditation. Thus God's children are made meet for heaven by despatching their work on earth.

CHAP. VI.

MEETNESS FOR HEAVEN, BY BEING MORTIFIED TO SIN, TIME, AND EARTHLY OBJECTS, AND BEING ELEVATED WITH HEAVENLY CONTEMPLATIONS.

4. THE last thing wherein meetness for heaven doth consist, is a being dead or mortified to all things below, and alive and lively with respect to God and things above. It is true, converting grace deadens the heart to all sublunary objects, and lifts it up to divine things. Yea, sometimes the first convictions take off the sinner's spirit more than is meet, and quite damps the affections in reference to lawful comforts, and makes him think he must do nothing in worldly business, but give himself to reading, praying, and hearing; but God's grace in a little time discovers this to be a temptation. Yet as grace gets the upper hand, and the Christian mellows and ripens for glory, so he is mortified and gradually transformed and advanced.

(1.) By further victory over his corruptions; for as the Christian perfects holiness in the fear of God, so he doth by degrees cleanse himself "from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit," 2 Cor. vii. 1. Sin and grace being like two buckets at one chain, as the one comes up the other goes down; or as the ebbing and flowing of the sea, where it gaineth in one place it loseth in another; the more holiness, the less sin. Now the Christian grows stronger and stronger; "The inward man is renewed day by day," 2 Cor. iv. 16. So the body of sin is weakened, till at last his fleshly lusts are laid at his feet, and spiritual sins pay tribute to the grace of God in his soul. Pride, hardnesss, un-

belief and security, keep the Christian humble and watchful, jealous of himself, and maintaining spiritual conflicts against them, so occasionally he is a gainer by his losses, and rises by his falls; however the Christian grows more sensible of the burden of sin; as Paul, he cries out, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Rom. vii. 24. Oh, saith the Christian, what shall I do with this untoward heart? I am weary of these daughters of Heth; fain would I get rid of this indwelling corruption. Sin I hope hath not dominion over me; but O when shall the time come that it shall have no indwelling within me? But this is my grief and I must bear it, I am discontentedly contented with my burden, discontent with sin, content with God's pleasure. There is nothing makes me weary of the world but sin; could I live without sin, I should live without sorrow; the less sin, the more of heaven. Lord, set me at liberty.

(2.) By loosening the affections from all worldly enjoyments. O how sapless and insipid doth the world grow to the soul that is a making meet for heaven! "I am crucified to the world, and this world to me," Gal. vi. 14. In vain doth this harlot think to allure me by her attractions of profit and pleasure. "Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother; my soul is even as a weaned child," Psal. cxxxi. 2. There is no more relish in these gaudy things to my palate, than in the white of an egg; every thing grows a burden to me, were it not my duty to follow my calling, and be thankful for my enjoyments. Methinks I have my wife, husband, and dearest relations, as if I had none; I weep for outward losses, as if I wept not; rejoice in comforts below as if I rejoiced not, 1 Cor. vii. 29—30; my

thoughts are taken up with other objects. The men of the world slight me, many seem to be weary of me, and I am as weary of them. It is none of these earthly things that my heart is set upon;* my soul is set on things above, my treasure is in heaven, and I would have my heart there also; I have sent before me all my goods into another country, and am shortly for removing; and when I look about me, I see a bare, empty house, and am ready to say with Monica, what do I here?† my father, husband, mother, (Jerusalem above,) my brethren, sisters, best friends are above. Methinks, I grudge the world any portion of my heart, and think not these temporal visible things worth a cast of my eye compared with things invisible and eternal, 2 Cor. iv. 18. I do not only say with afflicted Job, chap. vii. 16, "I loath it, I would not live alway;" but even with Solomon on the summit of all earthly felicity, Eccl. ii. 17, 18, "Therefore I hated life, yea I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun," that is, in comparison, or in competition with heavenly enjoyments.

(3.) By spiritualizing worldly things, and using them as steps by which the soul mounts heavenwards. The believer considers that these things were made not for themselves, but for higher ends. All things are as talents to trade with for another world, Matt. xxv. 16; for an account must be given of them; not only ordinances and gospel privileges, but providences both sweet and severe, yea, creature-comforts, and all visible objects. Thus our Lord who had grace in perfection, made notable, spiritual improvement of material water, bread, vines, for holy purposes; and the more heavenly the Christian is, the liker he is to his head, and so meeter for heaven. Whatever this golden hand of

* Non est mortale quod opto. † Quid hic facio?

faith toucheth is turned into gold. The Christian fetcheth honey thus out of the hard rock; out of the eater comes meat. O, saith the believing soul, if meat be so sweet to a hungry stomach, how much more excellent is God's loving-kindness? If drink be so refreshing to the thirsty soul, O how sweet are the rivers of pleasures? surely his love is better than wine. If it be so pleasant for the eyes to behold the sun, how lovely is the Sun of righteousness? How sweet is home to the weary traveller; and the haven to the weather-beaten mariner? but infinitely more sweet and contentful is heaven to the tempted, burdened, tried saint. Methinks all I see, and do, and have, reminds me of my home; and saith, "Arise, depart, this is not thy rest." When I am abroad in a storm, I haste to a shelter. O think I then, that I were with my dear Lord, who is as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land! When I consider my dim eyes, my decrepit feet, my palsied hands, my panting lungs; O think I, when shall this silver cord be loosened, and the bowl broken at the cistern? that my soul may return to God. This is a pitiful, ruinous cottage, when shall I be brought into the king's palace? In this my earthly tabernacle methinks I find now a pin loosened, and a stake taken down, then I say and sigh with the blessed apostle, 2 Cor. v. 4, "We which are in this tabernacle do groan being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." Here is the soul taking wing to fly into another world.

(4.) The Christian is made meet for heaven by intimate familiarity with the God of heaven. This indeed is the height of a Christian's perfection on earth. The fitter for, and the freer the intercourse with God, the fitter is that soul for glory. What is heaven but

the enjoyment of God? the nearer God the nearer heaven; for where the king is there is the court. Truly, saith the apostle, "our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John i. 3. Communion with God, and assimilation to God are the life and perfection of our religion; and the former leads on to the latter, 2 Cor. iii. 18, "But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." As grace increaseth, glory increaseth; and the vision of God, though but through a glass, mightily increaseth grace, and fitteth for glory. Now it is said of some great persons, that they have spoken more with God than with man. O, saith the Christian, I could not tell how to spend my time if my soul had not frequently free access to, and intercourse with my best friend above: O that it were oftener and longer;* it were a fine resemblance of heaven to have fixed communion with him; but however, I write that day as black and lost wherein God and my soul are not together. I cannot be content in a public ordinance when I miss my beloved; I follow him into my closet, and there usually I find him whom my soul loveth. O then think I, that God would now stop my breath, and translate my soul into his immediate presence! as it is said of Moses that he died in the embraces of God, Deut. xxxiv. 5; (so some read it, or overpowered with divine embraces) would to God it were thus with me! Methinks, I am loth to part with these first-fruits without a full harvest; now let me go over Jordan, and see that goodly mountain and Lebanon. O let me not return down into this tempting world, to be banished again from thee! O come thou down to me, or take me up to thee. It is a pity

* Sed rara hora, brevis mora.

my soul should be thus tantalized with the sight of that which I cannot at present enjoy; well, since it is thy pleasure I am content to wait and descend to take my lot with my fellow men; only I shall be stretching out neck and arms, and be looking for, and hasting to the coming of my dear Lord. Come Lord Jesus, come quickly, make haste my beloved, and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.

But you will say, such a height of meetness for the the heavenly inheritance as you have described is not practicable or attainable in this life; if none be saved but such as you have described, woe be to all the world. I answer,

[i.] Most part of men are not capable of this actual meetness, not having what is habitual: namely, a relation to God, and a principle of saving grace; and no wonder if unexperienced persons call this enthusiasm, and unintelligible nonsense, for wisdom is too high for a fool; it is not to be thought strange if some speak evil of what they know not, and turn real experience into ridicule. Alas, they have no grace, how then can they exercise it? how can they evidence a title to heaven that have none? how can they despatch their work, that never have begun it to purpose? or be mortified to things below, who have their portion in this present life, who were never divorced from their lusts, and have no treasure above? We may pity such souls, for salvation is far from the wicked.

[ii.] Wisdom is however justified of her children. Sanctified souls know what these things mean, and though the best complain of their low attainments, yet the weakest, sincere Christian can set to his seal, that part of these things he hath found in his bosom as to sincerity, and is aiming at further degrees, and is not

content to sit down short of perfection, but is "pressing toward the mark for the price of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," Phil. iii. 14.

[iii.] There is a great difference in the attainments of Christians in this world. Some active, vigorous souls get nearer to God than others; some are children, some fathers, others are young men, that are strong, and the word of God abides in them, and they have overcome the wicked one, 1 John ii. 12—14. The meanest child God hath in his family will own and follow his father, though some dare not say, he is my father; but some are grown up to great intimacy with God, as that choice man of God, Mr. Holland, who said, on his death bed, "Speak it when I am gone, and preach it at my funeral, that God deals familiarly with man."

[iv.] Yet it is every one's duty to endeavour after the highest pitch of meetness that is attainable in this life; for as it is the nature of true grace, to become deeper and deeper, like the waters in Ezekiel's vision, and ascend higher and higher, as the flame or rising sun; so the Christian dares not but obey God's command to grow in grace, and he sees it necessary to comply with our Lord's direction, Matt. xxiv. 44, "Therefore be ye also ready;" and this is one reason amongst the rest which I shall next add, for what a a pious, dying minister of my acquaintance said, "That the best preparation of the best man, is all little enough when we come to die." But more of this anon.

CHAP. VII.

SOME REASONS STATED WHY THOSE MUST BE MADE MEET FOR HEAVEN HERE, WHO HOPE TO BE SAVED HEREAFTER.

II. THE next thing in the doctrinal part, is to assign reasons for this point, that all those and only those that are made meet for the heavenly inheritance in this world, shall eternally partake of it in the world to come. In handling this I shall endeavour not only to evince the truth of it, but to convince conscience of its necessity, and persuade compliance with it.

1. It is fit persons be made meet, because no man by nature is meet for heaven. Men are estranged from God, "even from the womb," Psal. lviii. 3; and are those fit to live with God till brought nigh? Man is shapen and conceived in sin, Psal. li. 5; and is he fit to dwell with a holy God till sanctified? Man is dead "in trespasses and sins," Eph. ii. 1; and is such a dead block meet to converse with the living God? Man "is darkness," Eph. v. 8; and "what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" 2 Cor. vi. 14. Man by nature is a "child of wrath," Eph. ii. 3; and how can dried stubble dwell with consuming fire? Alas, we are all enemies to God in our minds, Col. i. 21. yea, "enmity itself," Rom. viii. 7; and "can two walk together except they be agreed?" Amos iii. 3. Can the sin-avenging God and the guilty sinner hold intimate correspondence till they be reconciled? O no, it will never be. Heaven and hell will as soon unite as God and an unregenerate sinner. Will the holy God take such vipers into his bosom? Can you imagine

God will deface or lay aside his immaculate holiness, to take you from the swine-stye into his holy sanctuary? What cleanly person could endure to have a filthy hog with him in his parlour or bedchamber? "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee?" Psal. xciv. 20. No, no, "God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," with pleasure and delight, Hab. i. 13. If God should take men from the dunghill into his palace, others would conclude that God is reconciled to sin, that it is a harmless thing, and not that abominable thing which his soul hates. No, it can never be; graceless sinners, so remaining cannot dwell with God, Psal. v. 4, 5.

2. Because this is the divine ordination and appointment, that there should be a connexion between grace and glory, holiness and happiness, Psal. lxxxiv. 11. As sin and hell are joined by divine commination, so grace and heaven are knit together by divine promise. So Rom. ii. 7, 10, "To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, God will render eternal life." This is a connexion of grace, not of merit; of promise, not of debt; yet inviolable, for God's justice and truth are engaged in it. It is fit the infinite God should distribute his mercies to whom, and upon what terms he pleaseth; now he hath said peremptorily, "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14. All things are ordered and wrought after the counsel of his will, Eph. i. 11. First, he chose them "before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy," Eph. i. 4. They are redeemed to be holy, Tit. ii. 14; called with a holy calling, 2 Tim. i. 9; and therefore they are holy brethren that are partakers of this heavenly calling, Heb. iii. 1. Let wicked scoffers mock on to their guilt and cost. Such there are in the world, and

such must they be if they think to inherit heaven. It is God's ordination; you must be saints in this world, or never crowned as saints in the other; though you might be canonized for saints by men when gone, consider, sinner, whose word shall stand? God's or thine? Thou hopest to go to heaven without saintship, or meetness for it: God saith it, yea, swears it, Heb. iii. 18, that thou shalt never enter into his rest. This is God's counsel, that men must be brought through sanctification to salvation, 2 Thess. ii. 13; and can you think to overturn his appointed will, or counteract his counsels? Must the earth be forsaken for thee? Must the immutable God falsify his word to save thee against his will, yea, against thy will? For thou wilt not come to him for life: God will not be merciful to any who wickedly continue transgressors. The eternal determination of heaven is recorded in that chain of salvation, Rom. viii. 30, and all the men on earth and devils in hell cannot break one link of it. Predestination, vocation, justification, salvation, or glorification. Go try to turn day into night, or winter into summer, or to stop the course of the sun, before thou thinkest of diverting the proceedings of grace in the salvation of souls; but it is vain to attempt either; for his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure.

3. It is the design of God in all his ordinances to make souls meet for heaven. "It has pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Ministers and ordinances were given for perfecting of the saints. This is the means of conversion, "the power of God to salvation;* the means of edification, of resolution of doubts, consolation and confirmation; so are the seals of the covenant given to this end, to

* 1 Cor. i. 21. Eph. iv. 11—13. Rom. i. 16.

bring souls onward to this glorious inheritance. Now, sirs, consider, shall you receive this grace of God in vain? Shall all the ordinances be lost upon you? You must give account of sabbaths, sermons, and sacraments, shall they be the savour of death unto death to you, or the savour of life unto life? Alas, how do poor ministers toil and travel, pray and watch, weep and sigh to the breaking of their loins, and spending of their spirits, to bring you to God and heaven, and you pretend kindness to us, but have no real kindness to your own souls; we dare not but warn you in the name of Christ, lest you fail of the grace of God, and fall short of this inheritance; "We watch for your souls as those that must give an account: O let us do it with joy and not with grief," Heb. xiii. 17. If it be uncomfortable to us, it will be unprofitable to you. Must our sweat and labour be in vain? But it will not be in vain to us, for our work is with the Lord, we shall not lose our reward. God will pay the nurse, though the child die. Our crown will be given us, if we be faithful, though we be not successful, for that is in God's hands; but woe be to those souls that have sat under powerful ordinances, and that miss of this inheritance! O woe, woe to you, you cannot lose heaven, but be plunged into a deeper hell. Oh, ease our hearts, and save your own souls: kill us, and destroy yourselves; murder yourselves, and you again crucify Christ, whose person we represent. Rather give us leave to espouse you to one husband, ἡρμοσάμην, I have fitted you, says the apostle, as things that are pieced together, glued or sodered, (let us do so with you,) "that we may present you as chaste virgins to Christ," 2 Cor. xi. 2. Would to God this were the fruit of our labours!

4. This is the design of all God's providential dis-

pensations : mercies, afflictions, smiles, and frowns come upon this errand to make souls meet for heaven. Cords of love draw, rods of wrath drive the poor sinner from hell to heaven. The sunshine of love comes to melt and thaw our frozen hearts that God may set a stamp upon us. The loving-kindness of God leads to repentance; Rom. ii. 4. O what an influence will God's unlimited goodness have upon an ingenuous spirit. As the sun attracts vapours from the earth, so this Sun of righteousness should and will, if our sturdy hearts hinder not, raise our hearts heaven-wards. It is pity we should stop here at the streams, and not be led up to the fountain. May this long-suffering of the Lord be your salvation; 2 Pet. iii. 15. May love constrain you to love God; may these loadstones so attract you, and these grapes of Canaan enamour you, that you may never rest till you appear before God in Zion. And what are all God's rods and redoubled strokes for, but to awaken you out of security, beat your fingers off from the world, weaken your corruptions, and cleanse and furbish your souls, as vessels for the high shelf of glory? "For our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," 2 Cor. iv. 17. How is that? Surely by working the soul into a fitness for that glory. This furnace melts away the dross of our hearts. Sea-tossings clear the water of grace; the dark night fits for a pleasant morning; these pangs prepare us for deliverance; these blustering storms make us produce the peaceable fruits of righteousness, being sanctified by the Spirit, and improved by faith. Affliction is God's physic, which produces sickness, but afterwards is the means of health; and shall we frustrate God's design in this also? What, are you content with a heaven here,

and a hell hereafter? Nay, can you be content with a hell in both worlds? Must these be preludes to everlasting burnings? God forbid. Look at the Lord's end in these sufferings, and let it be yours.

5. The time of this life is the only time men have given them to be made meet for heaven. This life is an introduction to an eternal state. It is a seminary for another world. Gal. vi. 7, 8, "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap: he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." Sowing seed is preparatory to reaping; yet men must expect only to reap that kind of grain which is sown; none can think to reap wheat who sowed oats; and you know there is more abundance in the reaping than in the sowing. So in this case, hell torments will be more exquisite and permanent, than the profit and pleasure of the sinner in sinning. Heaven's joys will infinitely surmount the Christian's labours and sorrows in this world; and there is great equity in both cases, for the object sinned against is infinite, and satisfaction can never be made by a finite creature; also the grace, from whence flows eternal life, is infinite, and will have an endless duration. But the point I am upon is to demonstrate the necessity of making meet for heaven in this world, or it will never be done: now or never. When the door is shut, the gulf fixed, and the soul loosed from the body, and has launched out into the vast ocean of eternity, there is no returning back to get the oil of grace, nor equipping the soul for another world. Eccles. ix. 10, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest." Time lasts not, but floats away apace; but what is everlasting depends upon it. In this world we

we either win or lose eternal felicity.* The great weight of eternity hangs on the small and brittle thread of life. "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation;" 2 Cor. vi. 2. This is our working day, our market time; surely it becomes us to lay that foundation well, which bears such a superstructure; to cast that anchor safely which is entrusted with a vessel so richly laden. O sirs, sleep now, and awake in hell, whence there is no redemption. Suppose by misdemeanour you had forfeited your estate and life, and upon much intercession, the king should cause an hour-glass to be turned, and set you a work to do, or lesson to learn; if you performed it you are pardoned and promoted, if not, tortured and executed: O how diligent would you be! What pains would you take? The case is your own, sirs; heaven and hell are before you; according to your improvement or non-improvement of this hour of life, so must you fare; dream not of a purgatory; "as the tree falls, so it lies. You enter by death into an unchangeable state, only the body at the resurrection will be joined to the soul to be partner with it in weal or woe, bliss or bane for ever. The state here is [*tempus operis*] the time of working; hereafter [*mercedis*] of reward. O look, before you leap into another world.

6. The Christian must be made meet here for the inheritance above, because he hath abundance of work to do, and privileges to gain, in order to the full possession of this blessed inheritance above. We have many graces to exercise, duties to perform, corruptions to subdue, temptations to resist, burdens to bear, mercies to improve, that will never be managed aright without a mind qualified for managing them. And observe it, the same disposition is requisite for

* Hic aut accipimus, aut amittimus vitam æternam.

making a Christian meet for any duty, that is requisite to make him meet for glory; the same habitual principle, and drawing it forth into lively exercise. Not only must the man of God be perfect, "thoroughly furnished unto all good works," 2 Tim. iii. 17; but every Christian, that is "a vessel unto honour, must be sanctified and so meet for his master's use, and prepared unto every good work," 2 Tim. ii. 21. Alas, an unsanctified heart is unfit for spiritual service. Solomon saith, "The legs of the lame are not equal," he halts and goes limping, "so is a parable in the mouth of fools," Prov. xxvi. 7. How awkwardly and bunglingly doth he go to work in sacred things; just as an unskilful person handles a lute, a viol, or instrument of music; or as the men of Ephraim could not frame to pronounce Shibboleth aright, Judg. xii. 6. There must be a suitableness betwixt the agent and acts: no carnal heart can do any one good work well; materially he may do what is good, but not formally as good; in a good manner, for a good end; acceptably to God, or profitably to himself; "For they that are in the flesh cannot please God; and without faith it is impossible to please him." And can we think God will carry them to heaven that never struck a right stroke, or never did one hour's work for him, that he would accept? A graceless sinner is like the fruitless vine-tree, that is not meet for any work, but is cast into the fire for fuel; just so that branch which is professionally in Christ, which beareth not fruit, "is taken away, and cast into the fire and burned." * The divine wisdom is seen in suiting means to the end, object to the faculty, back to the burden; now graceless sinners are not fit for God's work, and if they be not fit in this world, they will never be fit.

* Rom. viii. 8. Heb. xi. 6. Ezek. xv. 3—5. John xv. 2—6.

2. The Christian hath many privileges to enjoy which he must be meet for even in this world, as reconciliation, justification, adoption, joy in the Holy Ghost, peace of conscience, communion with God, audience of prayers, &c. All these God hath promised, and Christ hath purchased for his children; they are children's bread, and must not be given to dogs. God will not throw away his mercies on such as value them not, but scorn them; they set light by precious delicacies of his table. The whole slight the physician; the full soul loaths the honey-comb; the carnal heart will not thank God for pardon and grace; and can we think God will force his blessings on such ungrateful miscreants, that scorn both him and his kindness? No, surely there are some that long for these blessings, and will thankfully accept them.* Yea, he will make you prize them, and part with all for them, or you shall never have them. What think you, doth not the great God take care to secure his own glory, as well as man's felicity? And would it not be dishonourable to God to bestow his richest treasures and blessings of grace on such as despise them, and take more pleasure in rooting in the sordid dunghill of sensual delights, than in seeking first the kingdom of God, which consists in "righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." Alas, "honour is not seemly for a fool." These silly fools are not meet to sit as princes with the king at his table, because they want a wedding garment of suitable disposition for so high a privilege.†

* Matt. xxii. 5. ix. 12. Acts xiii. 46, 48. xxviii. 28.

† Rom. xiv. 17. Prov. xxvi. 1. Matt. xxii. 12.

CHAP. VIII.

ANOTHER REASON DRAWN FROM THE NECESSARY CONSISTENCY OF A CHRISTIAN'S MEETNESS FOR SO GLORIOUS AN INHERITANCE.

7. THE last reason why souls must be made meet for heaven is, because otherwise there would be no consistency or suitable adaptation of men to that holy place. If their natures be not changed, they will not have a suitableness of disposition to the glorious state above. The truth of this I shall demonstrate in these four particulars:—

(1.) None but persons made meet for heaven will have any mind to leave the world, and go to God. Carnal, unconverted souls are totally unwilling to go hence; they fancy to themselves an eternity below; "Their inward thought is, that their houses shall endure for ever," Psal. xlix. 11, yea, themselves; for they put far from them the evil day, and sing a requiem to themselves, as the fool in the gospel; and no wonder, for they live by sense, and know what they have here, but know not what they must have hereafter: like the old doting monk, that shewed his fine accommodations, saying, "These things make us unwilling to die." It was a usual saying among the heathens, "that Christians only are contemners of death." * This is applicable to sincere Christians; stoical apathy will not do it, but faith will. Julius Palmer, the martyr, said, "To them that have their souls linked to the flesh, like a rogue's foot to a pair of stocks, it is indeed hard to die; but for him who is able to separate soul and body by the help of God's Spirit, it is no

* Soli Christiani sunt mortis contemptores.

more hardship for such a one to die, than for me to to drink this cup of beer;" nay, when the Christian is upon good terms with God, he desires to be loosed or dissolved, "and to be with Christ," Phil. i. 23. Yea, it is the disposition of a soul meet for heaven, that he loves and longs for Christ's appearing, 2 Tim. iv. 8; but the sincere Christian who is not actually meet for heaven, though through grace he be habitually meet, often shrinks at the approach of death, and is glad to chide himself out, and say as a holy man did, "Go out, my soul, go out, what art thou afraid of?"* And surely a man is more acceptable to God, and comfortable in death, who hath set all things straight, and hath nothing to do, but surrender his soul into God's hands; this man will make his Lord welcome any hour of the day, or watch of the night; but the other is like a maid undrest and unready, though for the main she love her friend, and desire his coming, yet in the present juncture and under those circumstances, she is surprized and troubled that he should find her in such a state of dishabille. This is the case of the unmeet Christian.

2. None but souls meet for heaven are fit for death, through which all must pass. It is true, the apostle doth discover to us this mystery, which among the rest he might learn in the third heavens,† "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed;" but this change is a peculiar dispensation at the end of the world, and may be regarded as equivalent to death. This is certain, the fruit of the curse, the sting of death will fasten its fangs on the unconverted soul, which is under the covenant of works, and not in Christ. It is only the sincere Christian that can sing that ἐπινίκιον

* Egredere, mea anima, egredere. † 1 Cor. xv. 51.

the song of triumph; or can make that brave challenge, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Only our Captain Jesus hath disarmed death, and it is only for his members; others are left to its rage, "death feeds on them;" it hath a full morsel of them. The first death kills the body, and the second death destroys the soul; but "blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection, on such the second death hath no power." * O happy state of real saints! Christ, our David, hath conquered this Goliah: the ark of the covenant hath driven back this swelling Jordan: this serpent may hiss and hit, not hurt; † strike down it may, not strike home; it may thrust God's children into the grave, not into hell: nay, our Lord sets his followers, who are thus meet for heaven, not only above danger by death, but fears of death, Heb. ii. 15; who can say as that gracious gentlewoman, a martyr, Written by me Ann Askew, that neither wisheth for death, nor feareth his might, and as cheerful as one that is bound for heaven. But oh the woful state of a graceless sinner! who is in nature's state, and loves and lives in sin, lies and dies in the old Adam. The saddest word in all the Bible is that pronounced twice in a breath by our blessed Lord, John viii. 21, 24, "Ye shall die in your sins," that is, under the guilt of your sins and sentence of condemnation. This appears awful from what he adds in the first place, "whither I go you cannot come," that is, to heaven, where sinners cannot enter. You will say then, no man can enter into heaven, for all are sinners, even to the last breath. When men are regenerated, is it *in articulo mortis*,

* 1 Cor. xv. 55—57. Psal. xlix. 14. Rev. xx. 6.

† Tollitur mors, non ne sit, sed ne obsit.

in the passage of the soul out of the body? May not all be changed alike then? * I answer, It is true all are sinning to the last gasp when breathing out their souls; but,

(1.) You must distinguish between a state of sin, and having sin. The best have relics of original depravity as long as they live: the death of the body only will annihilate the body of death: death is not properly the punishment, but period of sin; it reigns not in God's children at present, it shall not remain in them when dead. The guilt of sin is already gone, "for there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," Rom. viii. 1; and the pollution, the very being of sin is taken away, as soon as death strikes the stroke.

(2.) I see not but the mighty God can perfectly expel sin out of the soul, and also perfect defective graces, at the moment of the soul's separation from the body, as well as he did infuse a principle of grace into the soul, in an instant, at the soul's first conversion; for by death "the spirits of just men are made perfect," Heb. xii. 23. Mind it, it is just men, not wicked; God will not infuse grace into men ordinarily in their passage out of the world; as men live, so they die; † and if men imagine God will put another principle into their hearts just as they pass out of this world, as this is a daring presumption, so they will be mistaken; for how is a departing soul capable of such exercises or reflections as are necessary in the work of conversion? Alas, the eyes, being set, the lips quivering, memory failing, and the body in a cold sweat, is unfit for any thing; their hopes giving up the ghost as their breath de-

* In answer to this question, see three opinions in Dr. Tuckney, Theses et Præl. Theol. ubi videas præclare disputata, p. 269, —292.

† Qualis vita, finis ita.

parts: and it is a wonder that the souls of wicked men go quietly out of their bodies; it is strange they depart not as the devils out of the demoniacs rending, raging, tearing, foaming; but if conscience be asleep, death will awake it. Could you follow their departing souls a minute out of their bodies, you would hear the howlings of despair.

3. Heaven will not receive any souls but such as are made meet for it on earth. Rev. xxi. 27, "There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination—for without are dogs," Rev. xxii. 15. They say Ireland will not brook a toad, a snake, or venomous creature to live and like in it: I am sure heaven will not admit, but cast out an unsanctified heart. The legions of apostate angels knew this, who abode not one moment in that holy place after they left their innocency. It is said of the halcyon's nest, that it will hold nothing but its own bird; the same may be said of heaven: the serpent could wind himself into the earthly paradise, but none of the serpentine brood shall once peep into this heavenly paradise. For,

(1.) The text saith, "It is an inheritance;" now an inheritance is for none but children; it is true all God's children are heirs, Rom. viii. 17, and none shall inherit heaven except children: by nature we are children of wrath; by grace and adoption children of God. All God's children are begotten again, "to a lively hope for this incorruptible inheritance," 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

(2.) It is "the inheritance of saints," that is, of holy, sanctified souls. Persons must not think that heaven is like Mahomet's paradise, where there is delicious fare, pleasant gardens, fair women, and all sensual delights, fit lettuce for an epicure's lips. No, no, heaven is a state of perfect, immediate, and perpetual enjoy-

ment of God, suited to the matured faculties of a sanctified soul.

(3.) It is "the inheritance of saints in light." It is a bright and lightsome state, suited to illuminated souls; blind sinners can see no beauty there; such as are not changed from darkness to light are not fit for that state: see Acts xxvi. 18. Alas, a blind man can take no pleasure in beautiful objects, though the sun shine ever so gloriously. Heaven and light are synonymous; but light and darkness are directly contrary. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth," 1 John i. 6; and such dark sinners are far from a suitableness to this state and place of light. O therefore, poor sinners, consider this, the holy God hates all the workers of iniquity; the holy heaven is no sanctuary for rebels and traitors; God will not take such vipers into his bosom; thou must either be renewed, or never received into glory; it is an undefiled inheritance, 1 Pet. i. 4, a polluted sinner must not enter; this would be incompatible with all God's attributes,—as his justice, then God would give to the wicked according to the work of the righteous;—it would blemish his holiness, as though the unclean were his delight equally with the clean;—it would contradict his truth, as though God regarded not what he had said that no unclean thing shall enter there. Every attribute would have reproach cast upon it, if God should save the unsanctified soul. Nay, it would counteract the undertaking of Christ, who came to save his people from their sins, not in their sins: it would oppose the office and operations of the Holy Ghost, whose office it is to sanctify sinners, and prepare souls for heaven. That sinner must surely be in a desperate case that must undeify the infinite Jehovah, God blessed for ever, or else he cannot be saved.

4. The unsanctified sinner would not be in his element in heaven. Heaven would be a hell to him, except his nature were changed and renewed. Most men mistake the nature of heaven; they only look upon it as a place of happiness; it is so, but withal it is a state of perfect holiness. There are holy privileges, and the enjoyment of God, but what care wicked men for his company? They say unto God, depart from us; and their choice shall be their punishment. There are holy joys and delights; but how will they like that who were never pleased except with senseless laughter, which is madness? Above there is the holy company of saints, but they cannot abide to be near them on earth; how then can they like to be associated with them in heaven? There is holy employment above, but alas, they are not at all qualified for, nor can they be delighted with the work of loving, praising, or glorifying God. Augustine hath a saying, "That the new song and the old man agree not well together:*—no man could learn that new song, but the hundred, forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth," Rev. xiv. 3. Alas, they have not hearts nor harps tuned for it: suppose it were possible that our Lord should bring an unsanctified person to heaven, saith one, he could find no more felicity there, than an animal, should you bring him into a beautiful room, to the society of learned men, or a well furnished table; the poor thing would much rather be grazing with his fellow brutes: thus a poor graceless sinner would rather be with his cups or mistresses, at best in his markets, and counting his gold, but there are no such things in heaven; therefore if he were there, he would be quite out of his element, as a fish in the air, or a bird in the water, or fire. Can you charm an ox with music? or can you bring him to your melody, or make him keep time with your

* Canticum novum et vetus homo male concordant.

skilful choir? So the anthems of heaven, saith one, are not adapted to a carnal man's mouth, suit not his ear. Sinners now think sermons long, sabbaths long, prayers and praises long, and cry, what a weariness is it; when will it be over? And are these, think you, fit for this heavenly employment to all eternity? where this noble company of celestial inhabitants, "serve God day and night in the temple," Rev. vii. 15. Alas, the poor unregenerate sinner hath no faculties suited to such a glorious state and exercise, as are above; the mind, will, memory and conscience, are like a full stomach that loaths the honey-comb; these old bottles cannot hold the new wine of glory. You may as well hew the marble without tools, or draw a picture without colours, or build without instruments or materials, as a soul not qualified with grace perform the work of God acceptably either on earth or in heaven. O sirs, think of this, you must be prepared, fitted, qualified for heaven here, or else heaven will be no heaven to you.

CHAP. IX.

THE SUBJECT APPLIED FOR CONVICTION AND LAMENTATION OVER SOULS THAT ARE UNMEET FOR HEAVEN.

I NOW proceed to application, and all the use I shall make of this point shall be for lamentation and exhortation.

1. To produce conviction, humiliation, and lamentation. If men would think on such plain demonstrations as are oft laid before sinners in the ministry of the

word, they would at last reflect upon themselves, and say, am I thus or thus prepared? upon what terms stand I for another world? am I an adopted child of God? am I justified? am I converted to God, and brought through the passage of regeneration? have I made a covenant with God, and taken God for my God, and given myself to him? what saving change hath taken place upon my heart? If I should come to you one by one, and propose to you such solemn questions as these, Friends, whither bound? whither are you going? are you for heaven or hell? Oh no, you will say, God forbid, that we should not go to heaven! God is a merciful God; Christ died to save sinners; we do not doubt but through the merits of Christ, we shall be saved as well as others. Alas, sirs, these are too general grounds, to build your hopes of salvation upon. God is merciful, but he is also just; Christ died for sinners, but do you imagine all shall be saved by him? Let me ask you a few sober questions, and answer them not according to your fancies, but according to scripture rule: Do you believe that all men shall be saved? what is hell then for, which is so oft mentioned in the Bible? or do you think that the gates of heaven are as wide as the gates of hell, or that as many shall be saved as lost? dare you so directly contradict our blessed Saviour, and give him the lie? Matt. vii. 13, 14. Can you imagine that our Lord Jesus, who is the porter of heaven, will admit any but those whom he saith he will entertain? or do you think he will admit those whom he saith he will keep out? what think you, can any secretly steal in, unknown to him, or forcibly thrust in against his will? Is the infinite all-seeing God grown so weak or ignorant that you can deceive or conquer him? or can you bribe him to let you in with fair words

or large gifts? or dare you stand to plead in his face that you are qualified and meet for heaven, when he tells you, that you are not? Do you think there is such a thing as a groundless presumption, or flattering hope that will give up the ghost? Is not the devil a deceiver? are not your hearts treacherous? and are not they fools that trust these, and will not try by the word what they affirm? And have you solemnly and faithfully tried your title to heaven? have you not taken all for granted without a serious proving of your state, merely because you would have it so? are you content to do so in temporal things? and will you madly venture your immortal souls on such grounds as you dare not try? or can you think to escape the strict scrutiny of the omniscient God? Sirs, the business is important; heaven and hell depend upon it. Ministers who believe that there is an eternity, and certainly know upon what terms souls are saved, dare not but be faithful to you, and declare the whole counsel of God.

I must first tell you, Who those are that are far off salvation, and are utterly unmeet for this inheritance, and can pretend no claim to it. Secondly, Such as pretend a claim, which is groundless, and but a pretended claim which cannot be made out on Scripture grounds.

1. There are persons within the pale of the visible church, (for I here meddle not with heathens or Jews) who are evidently excluded. These are sinners that carry a black brand on their foreheads, of whom a man may say without breach of charity, these exhibit visibly the doleful tokens of eternal death and perdition. Of these we have one catalogue, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, "Know ye not," that is, methinks you cannot plead ignorance in so notorious a case so oft inculcated, that,

(1.) "The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God;" that is, who grind the poor, and overreach their brethren, when they have them at advantage, "God is the avenger of such," 1 Thess. iv. 6; therefore will not reward them with heaven.

(2.) Nor shall fornicators inherit the kingdom of God. Such filthy goats must be set at God's left hand. This sin (as venial a sin as it is reckoned by some) is ruinous, and excludes men from heaven. Do you think that such polluted dogs shall ever trample on the golden pavement, when God would not suffer even the price of a harlot or dog to come into his house? Deut. xxiii. 18.

(3.) Nor idolaters, gross, or more refined: for God will not permit his children to keep company, or familiarly converse with such on earth; and therefore they shall not be associated with them in the other world, for God is not well pleased with such.

(4.) Nor shall adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, inherit the kingdom of God; such vile wretches shall rather have fire from heaven, than be admitted into that holy place. These horrible acts of lewdness are not fit to be named among saints; and surely those who commit them cannot be received among saints. *

(5.) Nor thieves. Not only open robbers on the high way, or breakers of houses, but gamesters that cheat others, or purloining, wasteful servants, deceitful tradesmen, or wilful bankrupts, who basely get others' estates into their hands, and never intend to pay their just debts. These men, without restitution, shall have their ill-gotten silver and gold to torment them like burning metal in their bowels, James v. 2, 3.

* 1 Cor. v. 11. x. 5, 7. Eph. v. 3, 4. Rom. i. 24.

(6.) Nor covetous. These are fitly ranked with thieves, that run out with inordinate affection after the world, and share in her favours with great delight; that enlarge their desires as hell. These shall be shut out of heaven, for they have their portion in the present life, and are real idolaters.* These must be banished heaven.

(7.) Nor drunkards. Not only such as brutify themselves, and drink away their reason, but such as sitting long, continue till wine inflame them: yea, though they be not intoxicated, yet those purchase a woe to themselves, who are "mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink," Isaiah v. 11, 22.

(8.) Nor revilers. These are properly connected with drunkards; for the godly are usually the drunkards' song, that scoff and jeer at serious religion, and break their scurrilous jests upon the holiest saints: but there is no railing among angels or saints in heaven, Jude 9; nor shall such revilers come there: and one would think they do not desire to come to associate with those they so abuse.

(9.) I may add backbiters, who love to take up and blaze abroad a false report against their neighbours. These are excluded from God's tabernacle, Psal. xv. 1, 3; they forge all the calumnies they can against such as do them no hurt, wounding them secretly with a stab in the dark, or behind their backs; God will shut the door of heaven against such.

(10.) Swearers, that profane the glorious and tremendous name of the eternal God by horrible oaths, curses, and execrations: blasphemers of old were to be put to death, and if men now spare them, the flying roll of curses shall go out against them, and cut them

* Psal. xvii. 14. Col. iii. 5. Eph. v. 5.

off, Zech. v. 2—4. "Those that swear fall into condemnation," James v. 12.

(11.) Liars, that invent or utter falsehoods on any account whatsoever. These carry their own doom in their consciences, and they may read the doleful sentence, Rev. xxi. 27, "There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, or maketh a lie." The God of truth hateth liars, and will banish them from his court, as David did.

(12.) Apostates, that once made a fair shew, but are renegadoes to the truth, way, people, and worship of God. They bring a great reproach on religion; and our blessed Saviour pronounceth such as put their "hand to the plough and look back, to be unfit for the kingdom of God; God's soul will have no pleasure in them." O the dreadful end of those that turn their backs on Christ.*

Hearken, sinners, if any of you be of this number, read and tremble, there is no room for you in this glorious city above, you must be shut out. Living and dying in this state there is no more mercy for you than for the devils: heaven is shut against you, hell is open for you; how can you escape the damnation of hell? Matt. xxiii. 33. Alas, you are daily filling up the measure of your sins; the ephah is well nigh full, another sin, another neglect, and the next news you may hear, the talent of lead may be cast upon the mouth of the ephah, and thy soul carried into thine own place, Zech. v. 7, 8. One oath more, one lie more, one fit of drunkenness more, and thy iniquity is full, thy soul is gone. Who can tell but God may say to thee as to the rich man, Luke xii. 20, "This night thy soul shall be required of thee?" or as the word ἀπαιτοῦσιν signifies, they, that is, the devils shall require thy soul. Oh

* Psal. ci. 7. Luke. ix. 62. Heb. x. 38. 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21.

how eagerly are infernal fiends watching for a commission to arrest thee with death on a journey, or to strangle thee in thy bed, and hurry thee headlong into hell with them! Thy iniquity is filling up; the sunshine of prosperity ripens it apace; the sweet rain of gospel ordinances brings weeds to perfection as well as corn. As God's children are making meet for heaven, thou art making meet for hell. Rom. ix. 22, "What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:" κατηρτισμένα, made up, made ready, like sticks dried and bundled up to be cast into the fire. It is not said that God fits them for destruction, as it is said, verse 23, of the vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory. No, no, there needs no more to a sinner's fitness for hell, but leaving him to himself; he will fall apace downwards to perdition with his own weight. Ah sinner, thou little knowest how soon thy foot may slide off this slippery battlement on which thou standest, to the precipice of eternal destruction; little dost thou know how soon that flaming sword which hangs over thy head by the slender thread of thy natural life, may descend upon thee and separate soul and body, and follow this stroke of vengeance into the other world. Methinks thou wouldst not eat, nor drink, nor sleep quietly in this so dangerous, ruinous a state; every sin thou committest is a "treasuring up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath," Rom. ii. 5. Look to it, the Judge standeth before the door, death is ready to lay its cold hand of arrest upon thee; there is but a step between you and death; that door which lets you out of time ushers you into eternal torments; and are you taking long strides to hell? shall you not be there soon enough? can you not sink yourselves

low enough? must you needs add drunkenness to thirst? impenitence to your sin? Alas, you love to wander, you hate to be reformed; yea, you hate instruction, and cast God's words behind you, Psal. l. 17. Ministers from the Lord follow you with tears, intreaties, arguments to persuade, and means to direct, and willingness to assist you, in the best manner they can, in your preparations for a future state, but you are reluctant to converse with them; you conceal your state from them; they employ their time in studying to do you good; they spend their lungs in speaking to God for you, but all doth no good, they cannot be heard till it be too late; no warning will serve. Men say as that evil servant, "My Lord delayeth his coming, so begin to eat and drink with the drunken;" let them know, "the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in a hour that he is not aware of; and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," Matt.xxiv. 48—51.

CHAP. X.

ANSWER TO AN OBJECTION OF VAIN PRETENDERS TO A MEETNESS FOR HEAVEN.

SOME may however say, you speak terrible things against the profane, but I bless God I am none of that class, my case is better than those you have described, I conduct myself fairly in my conversation, none can challenge me for gross enormities, I go to church, hear sermons, pray as well as God gives me grace, none are

perfect, I hope God for Christ's sake will pardon my defects; I repent of my sins from the bottom of my heart, and believe in Christ, and do as well as I can; God help us, we are all sinners; God will not be so severe as you say; I hope I shall go to heaven as well as others.

My answer is, It is not as I say, or you say, but as God himself saith; do I say any thing but what the holy God saith in the Bible? Object against it and disprove it; but must not the word of God judge you another day? Hath he not told us in his infallible word who shall be saved, and who shall not? and will you believe God or your own self-deluding hearts? Besides, I stand upon habitual meetness chiefly. What art thou, man, in point of state? Art thou a child of God or a child of the devil? Tell not me that thou hast done this or that good work, but art thou savingly converted from sin to God? Hast thou that renovation which necessarily accompanies salvation? This I have considered.

But that which I shall briefly hint at, is to tell you that many go as far as Kadesh-barnea, who reach not Canaan: many go far, that die in the wilderness; they set out fair, and hold on long, but yet never obtain this heavenly inheritance. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate," saith our Lord, "for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able," Luke xiii. 24.

1. You say, you conduct yourself fairly and live civilly. Alas, civil or external righteousness, and abstaining from gross sins will not do. Abimelech, a heathen, was an exact moralist; Paul, unconverted, was blameless. These were not saints nor meet for heaven.

2. You say, you go to church, attend on ordinances,

and hear the best preachers, so did those that heard Christ himself; yet at last were rejected, with "I know you not;" and so many others have done.*

3. You say, you pray and perform many religious duties; so did the Jews of old, who were very wicked, and rejected; so did the Pharisees: some have the form but want the power of godliness. These are lifeless blocks.†

4. You say, you profess the orthodox faith, and are not guilty of heresy; so did those mentioned, Rom. ii. 23, 28: creeds make not Christians. A sound head and unsound heart may be companions. The Scribe answered discreetly and orthodoxly, Mark xii. 34, and was not far from the kingdom of God, but never came into it.

5. You say, you have honest purposes and endeavours; even some attainments in growing better and mending what is amiss; it is well; but Saul said, 1 Sam. xxvi. 21, "I will no more do thee harm;" yea, Herod reformed and did many things, Mark vi. 20. All this is good, but not good enough for heaven.

6. You say, but my reformation was begun and attended with strong convictions and troubles of conscience; yet this will be no good evidence, for Cain had terrors; Felix had his tremblings; yea, "the devils believe and tremble."‡

7. But I repent of my sins, you will say, and mourn sore. I reply, hast thou considered well whether it be a worldly sorrow that worketh death, or a godly sorrow that worketh repentance to salvation? Saul wept sore, Ahab humbled himself, Esau sought the blessing with tears, Judas repented himself, || yet all come short.

* Gen. xx. 6. Phil. iii. 6. Luke xiii. 26. Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 32.
† Isa. lviii. 1, 2. Luke xviii. 11, 12. 2 Tim. iii. 5.
‡ Gen. iv. 14. Acts xxiv. 25. James ii. 19.
|| 2 Cor. vii. 10. 1 Kings xxi. 27. Heb. xii. 17. Matt. xxvii. 3.

8. You say, but I associate with God's people, am well accounted of, can have testimonials under the hands of eminent ministers and Christians. I answer, so high did the foolish virgins attain, they had lamps, and waited, and went out to meet the bridegroom, yet the door was barred upon them, Matt. xxv. 1—12. Some have a name to live, "but are dead," Rev. iii. 1.

9. But God hath given me important gifts of memory, knowledge, and utterance in discoursing and praying, which surely he will not reject. I answer, so those introduced, Matt. vii. 21—23, had gifts of preaching, and working miracles, yet even to them the Judge will say, "I never knew you." Gifts and grace are different things; see 1 Cor. xiii. 1—3.

10. But I have grace, I have the grace of faith, love, and good desires. I answer, Simon Magus also believed, and was baptized, yet had neither part nor lot in this matter, for his heart was not right in the sight of God, Acts viii. 13, 21. There is a feigned as well as unfeigned faith, a dissembled love, unsound desire, and legal repentance.

11. But I have been exercised in extraordinary acts of piety, in zeal for religion, in reformation, and sufferings for God; I doubt not but this inheritance belongs to me. I answer, all this thou mayest do, and be no candidate for heaven: Jehu was a great reformer, yet a false-hearted hypocrite; young Joash was zealous for a season. What strict observers of the Sabbath were the Scribes and Pharisees? *

12. You will say further, O but I have assurance that my state is good, and not only so, but experience some joy and peace of conscience, which are as so many foretastes and prelibations of my future happiness. I answer, It is well, but see to it that they be of the right

* 2 Kings x. 16, 28. 2 Chron. xxiv. 4, 18. Luke xi. 42. xiii. 14, 15.

stamp: the stony-ground hearers anon with joy receive the word, Matt. xiii. 20. Balaam had extraordinary raptures in hearing the words of God, seeing the vision of the Almighty, and beholding the glory of God's people Israel, when he fell into a trance, Numb. xxiv. 4—6, 17; and there are that "taste of the word of God, and powers of the world to come," Heb. vi. 5, 6, yet such may fall away irrecoverably. Oh how many catch at the promises, and are pleased with a sweet discourse on free grace! Alas, these long for, and love gospel-delicacies, as children delight in sweet meats; and as Dr. Ames saith, "Arminian grace may be but the effect of a good dinner." Nature works with something like the appearance of grace when affected by that which suits the fancy, but sound conviction and deep humiliation have never in them prepared the soul for a judicious relish of divine things, nor produced such blessed consequences in heart and life, as in God's children.

Oh how many poor sinners are flattering themselves in a golden dream, and fear no danger, till they be past hopes of recovery! Many think they are travelling towards heaven, and never question it, till as they are stepping out of this world, as they think, into heaven, they miss their footing, and drop down into hell; they never see their error till it be too late to retrieve it. Oh that men were awakened in time! If you stay till death have executed his commission, it will be too late. The day of judgment must needs find him unready, whom the day of death finds unready.* Roman Catholics have a conceit, that the interval between death and judgment may do great things to make them meet for heaven, but they are mistaken. Death

* Imparatum inveniet dies judicii, quem imparatum invenerit dies mortis.

launcheth you into the boundless ocean of eternity; "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment," Heb. ix. 27. Ah, sirs, what think you? Is there a heaven or hell after this life, or is there not? and are you uncertain whether by death, you shall enter upon eternal happiness or misery, and yet can you be quiet? If you were not wavering in your belief of future things, you would be restless as long as you are doubtful. You owe your calmness and repose to nothing but your lethargy; if you were not infidels you would be distracted. What, man! liable the next moment to be wailing in hell, and not repent on earth? he is worse than a devil that trembles not under divine wrath. What, if it have not seized on you, as on devils, flames are at the door, wrath hangs over your heads; the only reason you see it not, is because you are blind. The Lord open your eyes and then I shall not need to preach terror to you, your hearts will meditate terror; fearfulness will surprize you, and make you say, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire, with everlasting burnings?" Isa. xxxiii. 14. It is a wonder you do not run up and down like men deranged; surely you have taken some opiate to cast you into a dead sleep, or intoxicate your spirits, as some malefactors do, that dare not die sober: even some wiser heathens took great draughts of wine, saying, "That no voluptuous person can go in his wits into an invisible state." But is this a making meet for heaven or hell? Can rational persons think to escape a pitfall by shutting their eyes? It is reported of Robert, Duke of Normandy, William the Conqueror's father, that when going on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and falling sick, he was carried in a litter on the shoulders of Saracens, he said, "He was borne to heaven on the devil's back?" and will you adopt his

language? Alas, will you trust the fiend of hell to bring you to heaven? is he grown so full of charity to souls? Oh forlorn case of miserable sinners! have you no better friend than Satan? that you can be content to be rocked asleep in his cradle, and carried with ease to hell, rather than pass to heaven in our Lord's chariot paved with love? is security your best fence against misery? Can the poor fig-leaves of temporary righteousness secure you from divine vengeance? can you be content to depend on that another day, which you dare not put to the trial here?

Alas, I am afraid, 1. Some are very ignorant and know not what is necessary to a meetness for heaven. Most think if they have but time to say at death, *Lord, have mercy upon me; God forgive me my sins; Lord Jesus, receive my soul*; they think they have made their peace with God, especially if they can say, they forgive all the world, and die in charity with all, and send for the minister to pray with them, and receive absolution and the sacrament, when perhaps they are little fit for such a solemn ordinance; then the minister commends their souls into God's hands, praises them at their funeral, and now they are certainly gone to heaven; these poor mistaken sinners blessed their souls whilst living, and men must commend them, and account them blessed when dead, Psalm xlix. 18.

2. Most are inconsiderate; they regard nothing but mere objects of sense, like the kine of Bashan, "which went out at their breaches, every one at that which was before her," Amos iv. 1—3. They never mind things out of their natural sight; they "put far away the evil day," little thinking what will be the end of their careless ways; either they say to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant; or else in

atheistical scorn and mockery, "Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die;"* let us be merry while we may; we shall never be younger; when we are gone all the world is gone with us; as if there were no reckoning day, or retribution in the other world; but let such study Eccl. xi. 9, 10. Rom. viii. 13. Luke xii. 19, 20. Psal. ix. 17. 2 Thess. i. 6—9. John iii. 18. Psal. l. 22. Oh sirs, disappointments are dreadful. It is sad, with a witness, to be confident of heaven, and yet doomed to hell; as Hamilcar dreamed he should the next night sup in Syracuse, which indeed he did, not as a conqueror, as he hoped, but as a prisoner. O how will it double your final misery, to live in confident hopes of reigning with Christ, yet to be judged by him, and banished from him for ever! If you say, "soul, take thine ease," and God say, "devil, take his soul;" whether of these think you, will prevail?

CHAP. XI.

EXHORTATION TO ALL TO OBTAIN MEETNESS FOR HEAVEN.

NEXT, exhortation may be addressed first, to sinners: secondly, to saints, to attain a meetness for the heavenly inheritance: the former by habitual, the latter by actual meetness for this glorious state.

1. I shall need to say the less to move the former class: having urged practical reasons from our natural unmeetness, divine ordination, the design of ordinances and providences, the season of life for it, the work and

* Amos vi. 3. Jer. v. 31. Isa. lvi. 12. 1 Cor. xv. 32.

privileges here requiring it, and the inconsistency of a frame entirely unadapted to that glorious inheritance: most of these are directed to the state of unsanctified, careless souls, therefore I shall say the less on that branch. O that I had here the tongue or pen of an angel! or the bowels of blessed Paul to persuade sinners to look after a meetness for heaven. Consider,

(1.) What else have you to do in the world? Your very children will tell you that man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him for ever. If you come short of these attainments you live in the world to no purpose, you are unprofitable cumber-grounds.

(2.) You frustrate Christ's undertaking in the world, and do what you can to render his merits useless; you tread under foot the Son of God, count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and disregard, if not do despite to the Spirit of grace, Heb. x. 29; you say plainly I like not the purchase, I will have none of it; you call heaven Cabul, a dirty thing, as Hiram called Solomon's twenty cities he gave him; and can you think it much to be dealt without heaven, when you thus "judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life?" Acts xiii. 46.

(3.) Every day brings you nearer heaven or hell. It is reported of the pious Lady Falkland, that going to bed at night, she usually said, "Now I am nearer heaven by one day than ever I was." One day added to your age is a day taken away from your life. O think when you have heard a sermon, or spent a sabbath, I am now nearer heaven or hell; the word hath been to me "the savour of life unto life, or of death unto death," 2 Cor. ii. 16. It carries me forward some way; if I bring forth meet and suitable fruit, I shall receive a blessing from God; if briars and thorns, I am rejected, "nigh to a curse, whose end is to be

burned," Heb. vi. 7, 8. The word either hardens or softens. Woe to me, if all that God doth aggravates my condemnation.

(4.) Eternity brings up the rear of time. If it were but making fit for a day's pageantry, there would be no such great need of diligence to get matters ready; though it is said, Jer. ii. 32, "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire;" though it is for the short exhibition of a marriage day? Oh but this is for eternity. An eminent painter of antiquity being asked why he bestowed so much labour on his picture, answered, "I paint for eternity." Indeed there is nothing of value but what relates to eternity. Eternity gives weight and emphasis to all created beings. The apostle thought all visible sublunary things not worth a cast of his eye in comparison with this eternity.* Alas, sirs, is eternity nothing with you? O my friends, this, if any thing, is worth attention, to be for ever with the Lord, to enjoy God thousands and ten thousands of millions of years, or to be banished from his presence, and tormented with devils and lost souls for ever. Oh this word *for ever* is overwhelming. A pious man in company sat in a deep study, and being demanded what he was thinking of? Answered, only with repeating "for ever, for ever, for ever," constantly for some time: this is indeed a solemn consideration. O that you would seriously lay to heart the great things of another world! On the one hand, the enjoyment of God and Christ, the company of saints and angels, the perfection of your natures, a crown of glory, fulness of joy and pleasures at God's right hand for evermore, through the perpetual ages of a boundless eternity; all this were worth praying, obeying, and suffering for a thousand years! On the other

* 2 Cor. iv. 18. See a book called "Glimpse of Eternity."

hand, think of the sting of conscience, the company of devils and damned spirits, the loss of God, Christ, heaven, and your precious souls, the burning lake, the bottomless pit, the scorching flames, and this for ever and ever—an endless duration! O sirs, if you would but look down into that stupendous gulf, what a change would it work in your hearts! You would banish your vain company, lay aside your worldly business, abandon your sensual pleasures, and mind nothing else till your souls be safe for eternity. This would be as the cry at midnight, "Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him, Matt. xxv. 6. As sleepy as they were, this startled them; so it would you, as if you heard a voice out of the clouds saying; sinner, thou art now summoned to appear before the dread tribunal of the all-seeing Judge, to receive thy final sentence, and to be sent to an everlasting state of weal or woe; stay not one moment in thy state of unregeneracy; haste, haste, make all haste out of it; fall to the work of faith and repentance as for thy life; defer not one day; now or never.

You will say, can I make myself meet for heaven? What can I do? The work is God's. I answer, God is the efficient, but he will make you instruments in this work. God's grace and man's duty are very consistent. Study Phil. ii. 12, 13. Up and be doing, and God will be with you. Though God must turn, yet you should endeavour to turn yourselves, Ezek. xviii. 30, 31. Though God make you a new heart, yet he will have you make yourselves a new heart. O sirs, without delay commence the work, examine, prove, try your state by the rule of the word; attend the most piercing, powerful ministry; search out all your iniquities, and confess them before the Lord with grief, hatred, and shame; beg converting grace as for your

lives; plead with God for pardon through the blood of Christ; solemnly renew your baptismal covenant in taking God for your God, and giving up yourselves to him, and then read, meditate, watch and pray, mortify your beloved lusts, obey the commands of God, and do these things speedily, seriously, and constantly, and see what the effect will be. If you will fall to it, well and good, if not, you are guilty of self-destruction; and remember you are this day warned.

2. I turn myself to truly gracious souls that are in a safe state for the main, as to habitual meetness, but I fear are far short of that actual meetness which is requisite, as to a lively exercise of suitable graces; a clear evidence of being in a spiritual state; despatching work off their hands, being mortified to time, and longing for heaven. Alas, the wise virgins slumbered and slept. I fear few of us are in that state of readiness in which we ought to be, or might have been, or to which others have attained; nay, it is well if now our souls be in that frame in which sometimes we have been. What decays of love, zeal, and tenderness of conscience? what backslidings, deadness, hardness, worldliness, and formality do God's children fall into? What staggerings in our faith of the reality of unseen things? How uncertain about our title to an inheritance above? Doth not our slavish fear of death shew this? Our instability and variable course in religion; our distractions in holy duties; our frequent closing with temptations, and too oft stepping aside into sin; our intermitting duties of God's worship, and estrangement growing between God and our souls; our unreadiness in our accounts; our unwillingness to go to God: all these too sadly demonstrate our unmeetness for heaven. Alas, friends, are we not yet meet? Let us be ashamed of our slackness; what

have we been doing all this time, with these helps and privileges we have had? Have not many young people and others that set out after us out-stript us, and are got to heaven? Are we not ashamed of our loitering and lagging behind? What has become of the many warnings we have had in different ways? Have we any greater matters to mind? Do we not bring dishonour to God and discredit to our religion, by our backwardness? And can we have that comfort and confidence in meeting the bridegroom of our souls as is fit? Alas, our Lord will be less welcome if he surprise us unawares, as I have told you. Ah, sirs, you little know how near death is, and therefore should be always ready to meet our Lord. It is matter of great lamentation that so few of God's children are meet for their home; and like wayward children are loth to go to bed, though God hath taken a course to weary us out of the world. The Lord help us to lament and lay to heart our great unmeetness for heaven. When sin, security, or insensibility steals in upon thy spirit, search it out, mourn for it, confess it, beg pardon for it, and recover thyself quickly out of it; rest not satisfied with any distance from God; recover thy wonted familiarity with thy best friend, and mend thy pace towards heaven, as a man in his journey that hath been hindered, hies the faster, to recover what he has lost by his stay; breathe after more likeness to God and fitness for every dispensation, and long to be with God in heaven. Alas, sirs, you little know how near you are to eternity. You see the sands that are run to the lower end of the glass, but the upper part, as one saith, is covered with a mantle, you know not how few sands are yet to run. God forbid that you should have your evidences to procure when you should have them to produce. If you be not sure of heaven, you

are sure of nothing, all worldly things must leave you, or you must leave them. Despatch all but this off your hands, and be as the bird on the wing to her nest, or the traveller, whose mind is still on home, nothing will please him but home. Say with Calvin, *usquequo Domine?* "How long, Lord, shall my soul be at a distance from thee? Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

CHAP. XII.

MEETNESS FOR HEAVEN IS A BLESSING WHICH MERITS GRATITUDE TO GOD.

I PROCEED briefly to explain the second thing contained in the text; which is,

That it is a transcendent mercy worth thanking God for, to be made meet for the heavenly inheritance.

If we must thank God for daily bread, for houses, health, estates, worldly comforts and accommodations for our bodies, how much more should we thank God for heaven, and a meetness for heaven? without which we shall never come there.

The truth of this I shall demonstrate in these seven particulars:

1. Spiritual mercies are of most worth, and deserve from us most thanks to God. But this is a spiritual mercy, Eph. i. 3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ;" it is ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις and so may signify spiritual things as well as places, that is, graces, privileges, comforts,

or whatever hath a tendency to the good of the soul, or eternal salvation in heaven: these indeed are a Benjamin's portion, a goodly heritage, the quintessence and marrow of all blessings. If God should give you the whole world, and put you off therewith, you are accursed and wretched; if he give you grace and glory, you are happy, if you had nothing else. Our Lord thought that a plenary benediction, with which he begins his first sermon, Matt. v. 3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God." There is the mercy promised, and the qualification for it, both choice blessings.

2. That which is the purchase of Christ is worth our grateful acknowledgements; but this is the fruit of Christ's purchase; it is not only a purchased inheritance, nor did Christ only purchase us to be heirs of this inheritance, but he hath purchased a meetness in believers for that inheritance; Tit. ii. 14, "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." How thankfully do men celebrate Christ's nativity! But that mercy of Christ's being born into the world, though transcendently great, will never advantage you, unless "Christ be in you, the hope of glory," Col. i. 27; his dwelling in your hearts by faith, Eph. iii. 17, entitles you to the inheritance he hath purchased. Look within thee, man, as well without thee, and above thee, for the fruits of Christ's purchase, and occasions of thankfulness to God.

3. The operations and fruits of the Spirit are surely worth thanking God for; but this is one of the most glorious fruits of the Spirit, to fit souls for heaven. Our Lord promiseth to send the Holy Ghost to supply the want of his bodily presence, and it is the richest gift that ever proceeded from Father and Son; such

as have it, "out of their belly flow rivers of living water," John. vii. 38, 39. God is to be admired in all the saving works and actings of the Spirit, the convincing, humbling, sanctifying, supporting, satisfying, sealing, comforting, quickening, enlarging, confirming, witnessing, and reviving operations of it. Alas, we had never looked after God, had not the Holy Spirit knocked at our doors; we had been blind in the things of God, but that the Spirit enlightened us; dead but that the Spirit enlivened us; we had wandered for ever, but that the Holy Spirit restored us; our hearts had been for ever hardened from God's fear, had not God's Spirit softened us; we should have been unlike God, but that the Holy Spirit stamped God's image upon us; whatever hath been done upon our hearts to prepare us for heaven, the Holy Ghost hath been the agent; yea, that Spirit that we have quenched, grieved, resisted, and vexed; what cause then have we to be very thankful? This is the golden oil, that runs through the golden pipes of ordinances into the candlestick of the church, Zech. iv. 11, 12.

4. The gospel dispensation is great matter and ground of thankfulness; "It is a mystery which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men," Eph. iii. 4, 5. But what is the marrow and main design of this gospel revelation? why, ver. 6, "That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel. O glorious design! O blessed charter! But what are we better unless we be partakers of this privilege? therefore the apostle saith, "Christians are fellow citizens with the saints." This is the gospel way of enfranchising and incorporating poor strangers into the immunities of heaven, and surely this is worth thanking God for. The charters of some cities cost

them dear, and the chief captain said to Paul, "with a great sum obtained I this freedom;" Paul said, and so may believers say in this sense, "but I was free born," Acts xxii. 28. Though it cost Christ dear, yet it costs us nothing, but reception. This new Jerusalem is built all of free stone, and shall not our shoutings echo, grace, grace to the head stone, Jesus Christ? Zech. iv. 7: especially since our freedom rescues us from infernal tortures, as Paul's did him from scourging; and makes us heirs of heaven.

5. Peculiar advantages not afforded to all, create grounds of thankfulness. Our Lord said, Matt. xi. 25, 26, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Alas, what have any of us, but what we have received? Discriminating kindnesses call for the most lively gratitude. What did God see in any of us, that might procure heaven for us? or within us what preparation for heaven? You and I are of the same polluted mass of mankind as others; most unlikely to become heirs of such a glorious inheritance as heaven is. What could God see in us to attract his heart to us? Nay, what did he not see in us to produce aversion against us? It was "the kindness and love of God our Saviour; not by works of righteousness which we had done, but according to his mercy he saved us," Tit. iii. 4, 5. Alas, what loveliness could God see or foresee in us to make us children, then heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ? We may say with honest Judas, John xiv. 22, "How is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?" It must be answered, "Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." When thousands are left, why art thou taken? How came it to pass that when philosophers and eminent

sages of the world were so bewildered in the dark about felicity, that God should shew you the right way to true happiness, and lead you into it, and in it? Surely all is of free grace.

6. Fittedness for any duty or dispensation is a mercy worth thanking God for. Such is the christian frame that makes meet for heaven; such a person is prepared to do God's will, or suffer God's will; he is formed for a prosperous and adverse condition; his foot standeth in an even place; like a watch in a man's pocket, turn it this way or that way, it keeps its motion; so the Christian in all conditions preserves his movements heaven-wards. "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger," Job xvii. 9. He is ready for any thing to which God calls him. Like the man of God mentioned, 2 Tim. iii. 17, "who is perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." O what a blessed thing it is to be in a disposition to embrace a suggestion to pray, read, confer, meditate, or receive the Lord's supper upon an invitation from men, or summons from God! The church in Cant. v. 2, found the want of this, when she saith, "I sleep, but my heart waketh;" that is, I have the principle, but want the exercise of grace; and, alas, how unready was she to entertain her beloved, though she had given him a call; and the sad consequences of this unfit frame are obvious, both as to her sin and suffering: but oh, what a mercy it is to have a heart ready pressed for God's service! Give God the glory of it, and it is worth something to be in a readiness for mercy, affliction, death, or judgment, as those are that are meet for heaven. The speech of Basil was noble, when Modestus, the præfect, threatened confiscation, torments, and banishment; he answered, "He need not

fear confiscation that hath nothing to lose; nor banishment, to whom heaven only is a country; nor torments, when his body would be crushed with one blow; nor death, which is the only way to set him at liberty." Polycarp was ready for beasts, or any kind of death, because he was ready for heaven: for as the Christian is delivered from danger by death, so from the fear of death, Heb. ii. 15. Death itself is the day-break of eternal brightness to the child of God; and is not this worth thanking God for?

7. God's promise of heaven surely merits gratitude. Could we get a glimpse of that state and place of glory, and the inheritance of saints in light, together with our title to it; O how would it dazzle and transport us! It is said that the temple of Diana was so bright, that the door keeper still cried to such as entered, "Take care of your eyes." Much more may we say so of the surprising glory of the heaven of heavens; and therefore our Lord saith, "None can see his face and live." But death blows dust out of the eyes of glorified saints, and the morning of the resurrection doth so fortify the sight, that it can behold this inaccessible light with admiration; even as all the stars face the sun. "Fear not little flock," saith our Saviour, Luke xii. 32, "for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Is not a kingdom worth thanks, and such a kingdom; and to have this freely of gift, not to wade to it through wars and blood, and all this by hereditary right, which is the clearest title? O sirs, do you know what heaven is? It is the immediate enjoyment of God, an immunity from all evils, a possession of all good, the perfection of our natures, the maturity of our graces, the destruction of all sin, the banishment of Satan and his temptations, fulness of joy, and total death of all grief. Indeed it is

such a state as can neither be expressed nor conceived. How vile and contemptible would all things below appear to one that with Paul, is rapt up into this paradise! I have read of one Adrianus a heathen, who was present when some martyrs were examined and tormented, he asked, "What was the reason they suffered such tortures," it was answered in the words of that passage, 1 Cor. ii. 9, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him:" the very rehearsal of which words converted this Adrianus, and he became a martyr also. O what a transcendent reward is there in those mansions above! and God doth not grudge us the knowledge of those glorious things. He is not like some rich men that will not let their heirs know, what they will do for them, till they die; no, the apostle saith, ver. 10, "that God revealeth them to us by his Spirit;" and ver. 12, "that we may know the things freely given to us of God." We may know them perceptively, not comprehensively; by faith, though not by sense. We know but yet in part, but then we shall know as we are known; not as God knoweth us, for our knowledge and God's must not be so compared, but as holy spirits know us both now and for ever, we shall both know and be known by immediate intuition; yet in this world God gives his children, though variously, some glimpses and dark representations, as through a glass, by metaphors or parables, and this discovery is to raise up our hearts in thankfulness, and longing desires to be above with God.

CHAP. XIII.

PRACTICAL INFERENCES FROM THIS DOCTRINE.

FOUR things may be inferred:—

1. That there is undoubtedly such a future state of blessedness for God's children after this life: "There remaineth a rest to the people of God," Heb. iv. 9. I need not go about to prove this, it is sufficiently and abundantly confirmed by abler hands; not only from scripture, but nature, reason, divine providence in the world, and the grace of God in the hearts of his people. Enough is said to silence infidelity in our hearts, and to stop the mouths of all deists on earth. Can any rationally imagine that God would endow man with such a noble soul, and furnish that soul with such noble faculties of mind, will, conscience, and affections, capable of knowing, loving, and enjoying God, with fears and hopes of a future state, and all this in vain? Can we think the holy, just, good, wise, and righteous God will always make the wicked prosper and afflict believers, and not right these things in the next world? Hath Christ come into the world to no purpose? What would become of his birth, life, doctrine, death, resurrection, ascension, intercession, and appearance at the day of judgment, if there were no life of future retribution? What would become of the precepts, promises, threatenings, motives, means and helps to a holy life here, and to attain eternal life hereafter, if there were no such thing? Can we imagine that the great God governs the world by a falsehood? Are heaven and hell bugbears, or mere imaginations of brain-sick fools? Is there not a reality in Satan's temptations, to draw

there no devils or spirits, and so by consequence no God? Away with these wild conceits, contrary to the sentiments of all mankind.

2. Then it follows that assurance is attainable; not only objective assurance, that there is a glorious inheritance, and that God will give it to some; but subjective also, that this is mine, that it is for me. I have a title to it; else how could persons thank God for making them meet for this inheritance? This assurance ariseth from acting of faith, and produceth "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God," Rom. v. 2. The gospel is a gospel of peace, not of fears and doubts. Assurance may be had, not only by divine revelation, but in the use of ordinary means. "I know in whom I have believed," 2 Tim. i. 12; read on, and you will find not only his assurance of his present happy state, but his perseverance and future felicity; and it was not his peculiar privilege, but is common to other believers, 2 Cor. v. 1. It is true, God is a free agent, and may bestow it on whom, and when he pleaseth. Some have it most clearly at first conversion: as Bernard for a time after his conversion, remained as it were, deprived of his senses, by the superabundant consolations he had from God. Cyprian saith, "He thought before his conversion, it was impossible to find such raptures and transports as now he found in a christian course." Many a close walking Christian can set his seal to this truth; only it ordinarily comes in after hard conflicts with temptation, wrestlings with God, much experience, and regular walking with God; there is salvation and there are the joys of God's salvation, Psal. li. 12, "These," saith Mr. Latimer, "are the sweet-meats of the feast of a good conscience." There are many other grateful portions at the feast, but this is the banquet; this is better felt than ex-

or drive us from God and future happiness? or are pressed, and must be endeavoured after, and prayed for; "Ask," saith our Lord, "and ye shall receive that your joy may be full," John xvi. 24.

3. That the exercise of thankfulness is a Christian's important duty. This, this is the proper character and employment of a Christian: God commands it, privileges call for it, gracious souls have been much engaged in it; it is comprehensive of man's whole duty. Ursin entitles the practical part of his catechism, *de Gratitudine*, on Gratitude. O that Christians were more in it! Praise is comely for the upright. This is the epitome of religion, the emblem of heaven, the proper air in which a Christian breathes; it is most acceptable to God, creditable to religion, and profitable to the Christian. Mr. Fox tells us, the state of Zurich engraved the year of their deliverance from popery upon pillars, in letters of gold, for a lasting memorial; and have not Christians cause to thank God for grace and glory? The heathens could say, "Call a man ungrateful, and you cannot call him worse." Hezekiah brought wrath on himself, Judah, and Jerusalem, for not rendering to the Lord according to benefits done to him, 2 Chron. xxxii. 25. O sirs, you little know what an evil ingratitude is; you fill your souls with guilt; you too much resemble wicked men whose character is unthankful, 2 Tim. iii. 2. This sin makes hard times, yea, it makes you like the worst of heathen, for which sin God gave them up to unbridled sensuality, Rom. i. 21, 24: you act disingenuously, as those that have served themselves of God, and then disown him. How can you apply to God in the next strait, when you are so much in arrears? will not your mouth be stopped, and conscience fly in your face? do you not daily depend on God for new

mercies? and is not thankfulness a natural duty? is not gratitude for spiritual mercies, a great evidence of your interest in them? and is not every mercy sweetened by thankfulness? nay, is not this a means to continue them? The more thankful any have been, the more eminent they have been; their graces have shone and glistered like pearls and diamonds. Yea, once more, the more thankful you are, and the more cause of thankfulness you will both have and see. Thankfulness for what you are sure you have, will produce a fuller evidence of that of which you are doubtful. The Lord humble us for our base ingratitude; which is, as one saith, a monster in nature, a solecism in manners, a paradox in divinity, and a parching wind to dry up the fountain of divine favours.

You will say, O sir, I could be thankful with all my heart, if I knew I were fit for heaven, and that my soul shall at death enter into peace; but alas, as long as I am doubtful and at uncertainties, how can I be thankful? Conscience would check and condemn me; and indeed I have more cause to be humbled and ashamed for my unmeetness, than thankful for any meetness I find in me for heaven.

Answ. (1.) There may be grounds both of humiliation and thankfulness in the same soul and subject. Let the best saints do the best they can, and attain to the highest pitch imaginable, they will have cause of humiliation for their defects.

(2.) Holy jealousy, fears, and solicitude, do well in God's children to keep them humble; and indeed, as grace increaseth, sight of imperfections increaseth, and sense of short coming: the more discoveries of God's holiness, the viler will the Christian be in his own eyes, as Job and Isaiah; and the humbler the soul is

the more acceptable with God.* Thank God for that humility.

(3.) You may and should be thankful for the mercies which you have, and which you cannot deny that God hath vouchsafed. You have your lives for a prey; you are out of hell, which is more than you deserve; you have abundant outward mercies, do not these deserve thankfulness? Christ hath also purchased grace and glory for sinners, nay, further, he hath put thousands into possession of this inheritance, and should not this make you thankful? Besides, heaven is offered to you, and you are under the means of grace, and have a possibility of obtaining this happiness, which is not the case with devils and lost souls; and is not this ground of thankfulness?

(4.) Be sure you keep in mind the distinction of habitual and actual meetness for heaven. If you have not the former, either relative or real, if you be not adopted or justified, and are neither converted, nor have entered into a covenant engagement with God, I say, the Lord have mercy on you, your case is doleful; you have great cause of lamentation. O man, "Be afflicted and mourn, let your laughter be turned into mourning, your joy to heaviness," James iv. 9; you, graceless "rich men, weep and howl, for your miseries that shall come upon you," James v. 1. I have not a word of comfort from the Lord to you. Your earthly inheritance shall be taken from you, and you shall be thrust into the dungeon of hell. You may for a while kindle a fire, and warm yourselves at the sparks you have kindled, but, saith God, "this shall you have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow," Isa. l. 11. Stand you by while the saints take comfort in their portion. Read Isa. lxv. 13—15.

* Job xlii. 5, 6. Isaiah vi. 5. lvii. 15. lxvi. 2.

It is to you, the heirs of promise, to whom I am now speaking, and bear you this in mind, that it is one thing to have a right to this inheritance, another to know you have a right. Many a gracious person is much in the dark about his relation, yet his state may be safe for the main. What sayest thou? hast thou not the things that accompany salvation? Heb. vi. 9. Hath not God been dealing with thy heart, as he useth to deal with such as he designs for heaven? Hast thou not seen thy woful state by nature? the necessity of Christ and grace? Hast thou not experienced a change from nature to grace, from death to life? Hath not this new birth cost thee griefs and groans, prayers and tears? Dost thou not delight now in what thou didst disdain? Is not thy principle, rule, and end, otherwise than formerly? Hast thou not changed thy company, course, and manner of life? Speak out, man, belie not thyself, deny not God's grace; something like grace thou seest in thyself, and to be sure Satan and the world oppose it, and man and thyself could not produce it: it is of God, a seed sown by the hand of omnipotency. "And he that hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ," Phil. i. 6.

As to actual meetness for heaven, I refer you to what hath been laid down before; look it over, deal impartially; see if your experience do not answer those particulars; hath not God helped you in the exercise of the graces of faith, hope, love, and humility? Hath not God given you some substantial evidence of sincerity, by diligence in duty, reflection on your state, appealing to God, and pleading with God for the Spirit's sealing? Hath not God helped you to be despatching your work off your hands, spiritual and temporal, relative and public? Are you not much more

mortified to corruption and worldly enjoyments, and have you not spiritualized earthly things, and got more intimate familiarity with God? What say you to these things? Do not your hearts echo back an affirmative, setting your seal to these things? I have not time nor room to enlarge further; but I would have you diligently compare yourselves now with what you were some years ago. Is not your repentance more evangelical? Doth not the sense of divine love extort from you more tears of godly sorrow, and more vehement hatred of all sin, purely as it is offensive to God? Hath not your faith been more vigorous in its actings on your dear Lord? in closing more fully with promises? Have you not been more frequent and serious in renewing your covenant with God? and have not such days and duties been solemn heart-melting opportunities? Have you not been more constant and enlarged in the duty of secret prayer, with shorter intermissons and more enjoyment? Do you not spend your time better than formerly? Are you not more concerned to fill up every vacancy with some useful business relative to earth or heaven? Have you not more incomes of grace and assistance in duties both as to matter and manner, to unite your hearts, and raise your affections to God, and sometimes suggest words to you? Do you not more concern yourselves for the souls of relations and others in prayer and discourse, being more weighted with the necessity of their conversion? Are you not more endeared to saints as saints, though poor, or rough in their manners, or of a different persuasion? Have you not got power over your passions, to regulate them? and if you feel unruly emotions, can you pray them down, and through grace calm them? Can you not put up with injuries and affronts, and not only so as not to revenge but forgive, and pray heartily for the

repentance and remission of such as are most malicious against you? Is it not more the grief of thy heart when God is dishonoured, his Spirit grieved, and his gospel reproached by the sins of the profane or of professors? If thou thinkest any are offended by thee, is it not more a real trouble to thee than formerly, and thou canst not rest till thou seekest reconciliation? And if thou art conscious of giving them just occasion, thou acknowledgest thy fault and makest concession to them? Hast thou not learned more faithfully and discreetly to manage the duty of privately admonishing an offending Christian, drawing out bowels of compassion for such as are fallen? Do not public concerns of the church or nation lie nearer thy heart daily? Canst thou not more rejoice in the gifts, graces, holiness, and usefulness of others, though they may obscure thine? Art thou not more glad when corruptions are mortified than gratified, when occasions of sinning are removed, rather than afforded, though it cost thee dear? Dost thou not more sensibly understand the sweet life of faith in temporal things, committing all to God, and finding provision has been strangely made? Are not thy affections more spiritualized towards dearest relations? Dost thou not love them in the Lord, and the Lord in them, so that thou canst freely part with them upon God's call? Art thou not more taken up with God's mercies, to give him the glory of them, than any personal satisfaction thou hast in them? Is not thy heart daily more weary of the world, and longing more for heaven? Yet after all this, canst thou not say, thou art nothing, and deservest nothing but hell? And if God glorify his justice in thy confusion, thy mouth is stopped, and thou must justify him for ever with flames about thine ears? Dost thou not account thyself the greatest of sinners,

and least of saints, judging that by the grace of God thou art what thou art? and this thou canst truly say, that God is more thy exceeding joy, and Christ more precious to thy soul than ever?

If thou canst in thy sober, deliberate, settled frame, answer these questions, thy state is safe and happy, and thou art meet for heaven; yet not so meet, but still breathing after more meetness, till the last breath of life; for no man on this side death was ever meet enough, and all must be ascribed to grace, grace in the foundation, and grace in the topstone.

THE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY;

OR,

A Discourse

ON THE

GATHERING OF ALL SAINTS TO CHRIST,

COMPRISING SOME

MEDITATIONS UPON II. THESS. II. 1.

TO THE

CHRISTIAN READER.

NEXT to the immediate enjoyment of God, which is the summit of a gracious soul's felicity, it is no doubt an adventitious comfort to the children of God, that they shall meet with all the holy souls in heaven, of whom they have heard, and with whom they have enjoyed sweet communion in this lower world. What a transport of love was there in the case of the affectionate Jonathan and his beloved David, on their mutual embraces when they "kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded!" 1 Sam. xx. 41. Who can read that passage without emotion! But O, with what raptures of transcendent joy will those holy souls be filled, upon their meeting in heaven! Where briny tears shall be wiped from their weeping eyes, and sin and sorrow shall flee away! Such joy would swell their hearts and extinguish life, (as the father died for joy on his two sons coming off victors in the Olympic games) did not Almighty grace capacitate and strengthen them. When they told Jacob that Joseph was yet alive, "Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not," but when he saw the waggons sent to carry him, "the spirit of Jacob revived."* O but what full demonstrations both of the certainty and exalted nature of the felicity of our pious friends, will there be in glory! No hesitation will remain whether it be so, no bitter ingredients to allay this joy. How will these pure streams mingle and recur with ecstasy to all eternity! The once tenderhearted mother will turn her desires into delight, and say, "What, my son! and what, the son of my womb! and what, the son of my vows!"† Thou art welcome hither, now my tormenting anxieties are turned into triumphant songs. What

* Gen. xlv. 26, 27. † Prov. xxxi. 2.

sweet solace will the godly husband and gracious wife find in each other! Once "heirs together of the grace of life,"* now full possessors of the life of glory. The pious christian friends that "walked to the house of God in company, and took sweet counsel together," are now "abundantly satisfied with the fatness of God's house, and drink of the rivers of pleasures;"† yea, bathe themselves in an ocean of delights. Surely it will be no small accession to their joy to meet their old friends, relations, and companions there, never to part more. If Archimedes was so transported with finding out a mathematical conclusion, that he cried out εὕρηκα, εὕρηκα, I have found it, I have found it, much more will the glorified saint be exceedingly elated, when after all his pains and fears, he can say, I have found my beloved, and all my christian friends before the throne! O happy day, O transporting sight! To behold the Sun of Righteousness in all his glory, and those radiant stars glittering in that upper firmament; this indeed will surprise the soul with astonishment. The reading of the incomparable writings of eminent ministers, hath been often a great refreshment to studious and serious minds. Heinsius, the learned librarian of Leyden, professed, that when he had shut up himself among so many illustrious authors, he seemed to sit down there as in the very lap of eternity, and pitied rich worldlings who were strangers to his delights. But O how elevated in the scale of being are the spirits of just men made perfect! What pleasure will they take in the graces and happiness of each other! If David could say of Jonathan, "very pleasant hast thou been unto me; thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women,"‡ O what love and delight will there be in heaven, the proper element of love, where souls will be filled with God, and delight in his image shining in all the saints!

It is certain, that all the real saints that have died since the world began, are taken up into heaven and enjoy God and each other; but whether the saints departed were previously participants of that glory which they have had since Christ's ascension into heaven, is doubted by some, indeed the contrary asserted,‖

* 1 Pet. iii. 7. † Psalm lv. 14. xxxvi. 8. ‡ 2 Sam. i. 26.
‖ Dr. Owen's Christolog. p. 158.

which I dispute not; nay, I am apt to think, every glorified soul loosed from the flesh, will be some addition to the joy of the glorified above. O what acclamations of joy will every soul landing safely in glory, occasion to the celestial inhabitants! Well met, brethren, after a tedious, dangerous voyage, in this haven of rest; glad, full glad are we that you are got safe. And whether the saints successively going off the stage of this world, inform them above of the state of the church below, I have not to say; but as there is no grief there, or causes of sorrow, so there are multitudes of objects and occasions of joy and triumph—the grand source of felicity, the place, the company, the duration—all afford occasions of delightful enjoyment, matter of comfort: and why may we not think their reflections upon their former state in this lower world, will contribute something to their happiness; yea, and their communicating experiences one to another in that blessed state. If any doubt, whether glorified souls will have such mutual, intelligible intercourse with each other, for satisfaction, let them read the excellent discourse of that valuable man Mr. John Flavel, called, Πνευματολογία, or a treatise "On the Soul of Man," 274—281, where you will find an answer to the objection of their wanting the organs and instruments of speech and hearing: "Surely," he saith, "the spirits of just men are not mutes; such an august assembly of holy and excellent spirits, do not live together in their Father's house, without mutual converse and fellowship with each other as well as with God." The great question is, how their intercourse is conducted? and he affirms out of Zanchy, "that it is but turning the key of the will, and their thoughts and desires are presently seen and known by others to whom they would discover them, as a man's face is seen in a glass, when he pleaseth to turn his face to it. Would one spirit make known his mind to another? it is but to will he should know it, and it is immediately known; and this internal way of speaking, is more noble, perfect, and excellent than by words and signs, both in respect of clearness, and also of despatch and speed." See both explained in the passage just now quoted.

This is the language of spirits, called the tongue of angels, 1 Cor. xiii. 1; but after the resurrection, when bodies are

united to souls, possibly there may be the use of bodily organs, howbeit in a more excellent way than now there can; yet in the glorified state, the joy of the soul shall be shared with the body. The best pleasure however is, that of the soul. Spiritual delights are far more refined and exalted than sensual; immediately after a gracious soul is parted from the body, it attains to a perfection of knowledge with more ease than it could attain to a small degree of knowledge whilst in the body. Yet it is questioned whether the glorified soul shall have an increase of knowledge, which certainly would be an addition to its happiness; for, the soul being a finite being, cannot at once attain a comprehensive knowledge of God, but what is enjoyed will be beatific. O what an emphasis is in that word, "seeing God face to face, and seeing him as he is!"* who now can tell what it means? It is true, the happiness of saints lies in "being ever with the Lord," and God's being "all in all" to them:† but their mutual delight in one another will be a blessed circumstance of their felicity.

Whilst I was musing on a great number of believers having breathed their last, ministers and Christians, formerly and lately, known and unknown, whom I shall now never see in this world, I began to consider what is become of them: surely they are not lost but preserved, when shall we meet again? where shall we meet? in what place or condition? I am assured by divine revelation, that the souls of believers do immediately pass into glory, and as our Lord saith to the penitent dying thief, "to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise," so he saith of the soul of Lazarus, "that he was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom;"‡ there only saints are, there all departed saints are, it is a place and state proper for saints only, yet common to all the saints, not one excluded, we need not fear want of good company, yet it is not the company of fellow saints that will make us happy, and as one saith, "Though the strings receive not their sound and virtues from each other, yet their concurrence causeth that harmony which could not be by one alone; for all the lines may be drawn from the centre, and not from each other, and yet their collocation make them more comely

* 1 Cor. xiii. 12. 1 John iii. 2. † 1 Thess. iv. 17. 1 Cor. xv. 28.
‡ Luke xxiii. 43. xvi. 22.

than one alone could be."* But in this, caution is necessary, that we give Christ his prerogative, and ascribe not too much to men, to expect that from them which is not in them; survivors are too prone to this idolatry, as popery testifies: but in heaven our affections will be regular, God will have his due, and saints theirs; we shall behold God in his saints. All the glory will redound to God, for what God's children have been and then are; "when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day."† O what a happy, honourable, triumphant assembly will that be! The contemplation I have had on this day and state, hath extorted from me these meditations, which have been very delightful to me in transcribing; and I shall pray that they may be profitable to the reader, and that we may land safe in that blessed haven, where so many of our pious friends and relations have arrived, that we may rejoice and sing together the song of Moses and the Lamb for ever; which is the prayer and care of

Thy faithful friend and monitor,

Sept. 22nd, 1698. O. HEYWOOD.

* Mr. Baxter's Saints' Rest, Part, I. p. 97. † 2 Thess. i. 10.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

2 THESS. II. 1.

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him.

CHAP. I.

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS.

THAT Jesus Christ will come down from heaven to judge the world, is an article of our faith, commonly believed among professed Christians: but there have been useless, endless disputes about the time of his coming. One would think, however, that what our Lord saith Matt. xxiv. 36, should silence men's curious inquiries and presumptuous assertions concerning this secret, for he saith, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only;" no, nor Christ himself as man.* No, say they, the day and hour cannot be known, but the year may. But that is a poor evasion, for by day and hour is meant the time; and if Christ know not, no wonder if he foretold it not to his disciples: for wise reasons it is concealed, and especially that we may be always ready. Grotius indeed saith, that Paul thought the

* Mark xiii. 32.

coming of Christ would be in his days, yet you see in the passage to which I have referred, and the context, and also in the chapter before us, that it would not be till certain signs foretold should come to pass, and after that, Christians were still to expect it as uncertain. Ignorance of it is needful, but error about it is hurtful; let us study what tends to practice.

In the text, the blessed apostle doth earnestly beseech them by all that is dear unto them, that no pretence either of spirit, word, or apostolical letter, do persuade them that Christ's coming is near at hand, for fear of tormenting their minds, or staggering their faith when they should find it otherwise. What those preceding signs are, see Baxter's Paraphrase on this chapter.

All that I shall do is, to take notice of this solemn appeal or obtestation in this text, wherein he adjures them: first, by the coming of our Lord; secondly, by our gathering together unto him.

It is a sacred and solemn oath, like that in 1 Cor. xv. 31, "I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily:" so here, it is as if he should say, as you have a high and honourable regard for Jesus Christ himself, and as you have a great concern, and make due preparation for the coming of Christ, by which he will gather us all to himself, and actually perfect the unity of his mystical body, both which are represented as proper objects of faith, which we admire and expect and highly esteem; I do again beseech you by these, be not too credulous of men's predictions, who assign that day to this or that time as they fancy; sometimes preposterously hastening it, other whiles procrastinating it, to a vast distance. I must tell you, saith Paul, these conceits are scattered by Satan's artifice; and it becomes a dangerous figment or invention of men's brains, for if it come not to pass,

some languish in their faith, others grow presumptuous in their security. If the devil prevail thus far, he will so work, that he will leave nothing sure or fixed in matters of religion,* as Calvin saith on this text; yea, by this means men loosen the cords, and break the bands that join together the articles of our faith, and even strike at the foundation article of the resurrection.

Observation 1. Ministers must beseech.

As they may command in their master's name, so as servants they must beseech all the faithful,† 1 Thess. iv. 1, "We beseech you and exhort you;" ἐρωτῶμεν, we humbly and earnestly desire you, as if we went down on our knees to you: hence 1 Thess. ii. 7, 8, "We were gentle among you even as a nurse cherisheth her children." Our business is important, sinners are obdurate, we have great need to use the most obliging terms, as though God did beseech sinners by us, "to pray them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God," 2 Cor. v. 20.

Obs. 2. All God's servants are brethren.

Be they high or low, rich or poor, the most eminent apostles or meanest, yea, weakest believers, they are brethren, they have all one father, God, one elder brother, Christ, one holy Spirit that animates them all, one covenant of grace to include them, one heavenly inheritance of which they are heirs. Hence the apostle saith, Col. i. 2, "To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ." O what an endearing relation is this! let us live up to it.

Obs. 3. Christ will certainly come to judgment.

It is certain this Nobleman is gone into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return to reckon with his servants, Luke xix. 12—27. Christ's

* Ut nihil in religione certum aut fixum reliquerit.

† 1 Thess. v. 12.

coming to judge the Jews, was the image and earnest of his last coming,* described 1 Thess. iv. 15—17.

Obs. 4. The coming of Christ is a most endearing consideration to believers.

This is to the Christian as the harvest is to the husbandman, James v. 7, 8, "Be ye also patient," saith the apostle, "stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." O what a glorious morning will that be, when the Sun of Righteousness will shine once again with healing in his wings! Then let the heirs of glory "lift up their heads, for the day of their redemption draws nigh."† You cannot entreat them by more strong and obliging obtestations or arguments.

Obs. 5. Though Christ's coming be sure to the saints and certain in itself, yet the time is uncertain to us.

Our Lord saith to his inquisitive disciples, Acts i. 6, 7, "It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power:" hence he saith, Matt. xxiv, 42, 44, "Watch, therefore, be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." This is a key that the wise God retains under his girdle; he keeps this secret among the mysteries of his glorious empire; let us be content with a wise ignorance here.

Obs. 6. Bold comments upon dark prophecies are apt to shake men's minds.

If sudden approach be foretold and it prove not so, men are tempted to believe nothing, though this is unreasonable that men will not believe what God saith, because what men say prove falsities; but many confident expositors will needs thrust their comment into the text; yet, a judicious Christian must distinguish, there may be great commotions, yet no immediate presages of a conclusion, Mark xiii. 7.

* Imago et arrhabo adventus ultimi. † Luke xxi. 28.

Obs. 7. That at Christ's second coming, there will be a great gathering together of saints to him.

All the elect shall be gathered into one Ἐπισυναγωγῆς, aggregation or congregation, a mighty solemn meeting. Ἐπ' ἀυτὸν or πρὸς ἀυτὸν, James ii. 2; which some interpret of free liberty to meeet to worship God in this world after their dispersion by persecution, which was forbidden by Pagan emperors, but granted by Constantine's edicts, thus Grotius and Hammond—but this is forced, there is a greater congregation at Christ's second coming.

The apostle, Heb. xii. 22, 23, mentions an "innumerable company of angels, and a general assembly, and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven." I shall say little of the angels, though God hath by Christ united them to the church, so the apostle tells us, Eph. i. 10, "That he hath gathered together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him." The angels of themselves are but creatures, and therefore changeable, so the word שנאן, employed to signify angels, signifies mutable, Psal. lxviii. 17; but receive confirmation by Christ, though not reconciliation; so that now they leave not their stations as did the apostate angels. But whether angels stand by Christ's mediation, or by God's election, (therefore called elect angels) I determine not. But I am now to treat of converted souls, which then shall be united in one body; that will be a wonderful amphitheatre, an astonishing sight when all the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and confessors shall be brought forth into open view, and shall be advanced to those celestial mansions with the highest acclamations.

In discoursing upon this pleasant subject, I shall consider the following things:—

I. The mode and period of the saints being gathered.

II. What is implied in gathering this assembly.

III. For what purposes they are gathered.

IV. In what light they are regarded when gathered to Christ, and the reasons of their being assembled.

V. What improvement may be made of it.

CHAP. II.

ON THE MODE AND PERIOD OF THE SAINTS BEING GATHERED.

BEFORE I proceed to the consideration of these particulars, I shall briefly explain the import of this term, and its allusions.

1. It alludes to a hospitable person taking in wanderers to lodge them, and kindly entertain them; so the word is used, Matt. xxv. 35, "I was a stranger and ye took me in," ξένος ἤμην καὶ συνηγάγετε μὲ, ye gathered me. Alas, God's children are strangers and pilgrims on the earth, Heb. xi. 13; as men oft cast them out, and "they wander about in sheep skins and goat skins, in deserts, mountains, dens, and caves of the earth," ver. 37, 38; but their gracious Father takes them in and provides them house and home, "a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens;"* Lazarus at the rich man's gates is taken up into Abraham's bosom, a better lodging than the rich man's stateliest chamber; thus God gathers them.

2. It alludes to a man's gathering a rich treasure together, gold, silver, or precious stones, as David

* 2 Cor. v. 1.

gathered a prodigious treasure for building the temple, "three thousand talents of gold, seven thousand talents of refined silver, all manner of precious stones," 1 Chron. xxix. 2—4. Solomon gathered silver and gold, and the peculiar treasures of kings. But what are all these to God's treasure? which too he calls his peculiar treasure, more worth than both the Indies.* These God hath his time and way to gather up, Matt. iii. 17, "They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the day when I make up my jewels." God's jewels lie loose and scattered, but he will string them, and lay them up safe with himself in heaven.

3. This word alludes to congregating together, as in a synagogue for religious acts, a holy religious meeting, "He hath built us a synagogue," said the Jews, that is, for religious worship, so the Hebrew word עדה imports a religious meeting. And we read of a synagogue of the Libertines,† but this assembly of saints may be called the synagogue or the congregation of licentiates, or highest graduates in divinity, that have in some sense commenced *per saltum*, and have ascended out of the church below, into the church triumphant above, being highly preferred by their blessed master.

4. The word imports a meeting in an honourable council, above an ordinary assembly, Matt. xxvi. 3, "Then assembled together the chief priests, and scribes, and elders," &c. these were the Sanhedrim and sat as judges upon causes criminal and capital, συνάγεσθαι, it signifies not a vulgar, or a common meeting, but a convention of states, to sit upon life and death; and though that was a wicked meeting to condemn the Son of God, yet this glorious assembly of saints shall be

* Laying up in store, Isa. xxxix. 6. Eccl. ii. 8. Exod. xix. 5.
† Luke vii. 5. Acts vi. 9.

convened to be assessors with Christ to judge their judges, 1 Cor. vi. 2, "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world, yea, angels." All the saints of God are kings and princes in all the earth.* O what an honourable jury will there be to applaud the sacred decisions of our Lord!

After having given the meaning of the word, I proceed,

I. To show the mode in which, and the time when the saints are and shall be gathered; how this gathering together is managed, or how the saints come to be gathered together, and when.

1. Converting grace gathers sinners out of the world to God. This is initial and preparatory; the word in Eph. i. 10, "Gathering together in one," ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι, is very emphatical, it signifies to recapitulate, or re-collect, or reduce all to a head; it implies that mankind by sin are separated from God, disjointed one from another, the members scattered, just like an old ruinous house that is fallen; all the pieces thereof are gone asunder, till the workman come and put them together, and rear up a stately fabric of the old materials. Man hath not lost the faculties of his soul by the fall, but its rectitude. All the imaginations of man's heart are become evil; he hath banished himself from God into a foreign country. In a natural sense, "God is not far from every one of us;"† but in a moral sense, God and unconverted sinners are at a great distance, they are "far off, alienated from the life of God," but grace brings sinners from their wanderings. The Spirit through the word unites them with a blessed cement in an efficacious manner, so that

* Rev. i. 6. Psalm xlv. 16.

† Gen. vi. 5. iii. 8. Luke xv. 13. Acts xvii. 27.

"he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit:"* and the blood of Christ unites God and the soul meritoriously. O blessed conjunction, O happy meeting! God hath found out a way in the gospel, "to gather together the outcasts of Israel." Alas, we are all as sheep going astray, but our "Lord gathers the lambs into his arms," and brings them into his fold; Jews and Gentiles make one fold;† for saith the apostle Paul, "ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," Gal. iii. 26. Faith makes a mystical, love a moral union; Eph. iv. 15, "But speaking the truth in love," or teaching it in love, "may grow up into him in all things, which is the head even Christ." O this, this is the foundation of all the rest; conversion is the first collection.

2. God gathers his saints by death to himself. It is said of Abraham, that he should "be gathered to his fathers in peace," Gen. xv. 15; and "he was gathered to his people," Gen. xxv. 8. Interpreters observe that this is usually applied in scripture to good men, with respect to the soul, that they go to their pious progenitors, and because this is applied to Ishmael, therefore the Jews think he was a penitent; but however, the phrase is applied most ordinarily to good men, as Jacob, and Aaron, and Moses; of Josiah‡ it is said, 2 Kings xxii, 20, "I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace." It is true, he died in battle, but in peace with God, and was translated into everlasting peace along with the saints; this is the way of divine providence to carry his children through a tempestuous sea into an haven

* Eph. ii. 13. iv. 18 1 Cor. vi. 17.

† Eph. ii. 13, 22. Isa. lvi. 8. xl. 11. John x. 16.

‡ Gen. xxv. 17. xlix. 29. Numb. xx. 24. xxvii. 13.

of rest; they shall not always be tormented with Satan's temptations, the world's opposition, or their own corruptions, but when they have done their work here in this weary world, "they shall enter into peace, they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness," Isa. lvii. 2. O blessed change, God gives them repose after the troubles of this weary pilgrimage, "they rest from their labours;" their bodies sleep in Jesus, and are safe in a quiet repository, and their souls do enter into paradise, that is, the third heaven, the immediate presence of God.* As earth is the common mother of all, so heaven is the receptacle of all believers.

3. God gathers them up out of their graves by the resurrection of their bodies, and the reunion of their souls to those self-same bodies. This was a doctrine believed and well digested under the old testament, Job xix. 25—27, "Though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; thy dead men shall live," saith Isaiah, chap. xxvi. 19, "together with my dead body shall they arise." The new testament doth abundantly confirm this great article of our faith, John v. 28, 29. 1 Cor. xv. 20, &c. O what an army of saints will start up out of the earth! Their scattered bones and dust shall be reared up, and re-organized, and our Lord will bring their glorified souls along with him to sing out the high praises of Jehovah. Roses die, sweetest flowers perish, and the beauteous complexion of the earth turns to a bleak and withered hue in winter, yet in summer there is a kind of resurrection; if you say of them, life is remaining in the root and seed; we say, the soul is the root of the body, and Christ the root of the soul, and both are living, Col. iii. 3, 4; and though there be no physical

* Rev. xiv. 13. 1 Thess. iv. 14. Luke xxiii. 43.

contact, yet there is a relative union betwixt soul and body, and the soul hath to it a deep-rooted love and inclination; the silly snail with its natural life and power, can make for itself a habitation, yea the silk-worm becomes a winged fly, the warmth of the hen turns the egg into a chicken; these are emblems of the resurrection.* And what cannot the power of God effect? If a skilful workman can turn a little sand and ashes into curious transparent glasses, why should we doubt whether the mighty power of God can communicate a glorious perfection to the flesh that is dissolved into its elements? Luther saith, I love the noble art of chemistry, it is such a fine emblem of the resurrection. O what a blessed transporting sight will that be, to see the sanctified soul united to the glorified body, to receive their reward together!

4. By the same power of God some shall be changed, others raised from the dead, the souls of the glorified saints shall descend and be united to their own bodies, and then ascend to meet the Lord in the air, and the wicked are left behind on their dunghill, the earth, in fetters, to receive their sentence, and to be confined to their prisons; this is that mystery, which possibly the blessed apostle Paul heard from God when he was caught up into the third heaven, and heard "unspeakable words," ἄῤῥητα ῥήματα, wordless words.† 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52, "Behold," saith he, "I shew you a mystery, we shall not all sleep," that is, die, "but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye;" this is further confirmed and explained, 1 Thess. iv. 15, "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep;" and ver. 16, and 17, "The dead in Christ

* See Mr. Baxter on Self-denial, page 296. † 2 Cor. xii. 4.

shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." Calvin saith,* "He speaks here of the faithful only; the resurrection of the wicked, is also a kind of change, though they are not mentioned: but with respect to such as shall bear the name of the heavenly or of Christ, it is equivalent to death, as there will be an abolishing of the former nature, and an introducing of a new one." This is a species or kind of death, but as it is not a separation of the soul from the body, so it is not a sleep, but a sudden transition from corruptible nature to a blessed immortality. Here is the difference between those that die and such as are changed: the former put off the substance of the body, but they that are changed, put off nothing but the qualities of the body, the dead shall rise before the living are taken up. He sends the clouds for chariots, as Joseph his waggons for Jacob and his family. O what vast numbers will then mount up like a cloud and darken the heavens! this is in order to their congregating above.

5. The angels of God are sent to gather up the scattered saints, Matt. xxiv. 31; "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."† It is true, some take this to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, but most interpreters apply it to this last day. Paul saith, "the trumpet shall sound;"‡ as of old, they called the congregation of Israel together by the sound of a trumpet; so now, "the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God," 1 Thess. iv. 16. I confess here are hard points, which no mortal I believe

* Calvin on 1 Cor. xv. 51. † Mark xiii. 27. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 52.

can resolve, as (1.) Concerning this trumpet, what it is, Calvin saith, I leave to others to discourse subtilly on it.* (2.) What kind of shout this is, which must be a sort of magnificent accompaniment of the Judge, and summons for all to appear; for the word in Greek ἐν κελεύσματι doth also signify a command, alluding to mariners or soldiers summoned to be ready. (3.) Who this archangel is, and what degrees there are among the angels, which schoolmen voluminously dispute, or whether it be not Christ himself, because it is said, "the dead that are in their graves shall hear his voice," John v. 28. And (4.) Whether this shall be an oral shout or voice from the mouth of Christ, or only an expression of his divine power, I am not able to determine. But such a summons there will be, and all the sons and daughters of Adam shall appear, not one person gentle or simple can sculk or hide himself, the meanest shall not be looked on as inconsiderable, and the most potent princes will be on a level with their fellowmen; in vain shall the "kings of the earth, great men, rich men, the chief captains and mighty men, bond and free, hide themselves, or call to the mountains and rocks to fall on them," Rev. vi. 15, 16. No, no, the summons will reach all, and all must obey and appear, whether they will or not; the mighty, almighty God can fetch them out, his all-seeing eye discover them. See the summons, Psal. l. 1—6, "He shall call to the heavens from above and to the earth that he may judge his people;" these are his words, "gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." O what a vast multitude will then appear! "Thousand thousands minister to him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before him;" yea, a great multitude

* Reliquo aliis subtilius disserendum.

"which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues will stand before the throne and the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands."* O what a glorious, splendid, shining company will there be!

6. Yet further, these multitudes gathered together will have their spirits in perfect harmony, they shall all speak one language, as the whole earth did before the confusion at Babel; there will be an agreement of minds, wills, affections, consciences, and conversation; no clashing, no discord, they shall be fully united, cemented, and perfectly joined together, and all according to one rule and canon; they all engage together in one celestial song, the heavenly choir of angels stand round about the throne, echoing to an innumerable company of believing glorified Jews and Gentiles, saying, "Amen: blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving be unto our God for ever and ever, Amen," Rev. vii. 10—12. It is worth observing, that upon Antichrist's ruin, "a great voice of much people in heaven was heard, saying, Hallelujah," Rev. xix. 1; "and again they said Hallelujah," ver. 3; then again, the four and twenty elders, and four beasts, still employ the same tune, Hallelujah; and still upon a new summons they add always Hallelujah, this was the Hosanna Rabba, as the Jews call it, or a *Hallelujatica victoria*, as the old Britons called their victory over the Saxons. All but faint emblems of that great solemnity, in which the multitude of glorified souls are with one heart and voice unanimously adoring their Redeemer, acquiescing in his righteous sentence, not one dissenting, they neither contradict one another, nor oppose the will of God: there is not a jarring string in this music: whatever dissensions or lan-

* Dan. vii. 10. Rev. vii. 9.

guages may be here, they all speak the same things there. Yea, though they did not understand one another's dialect in this world, yet they shall all speak the language of Canaan; whether it be Hebrew, as some conceive, who knows? but it will be intelligible by all that then meet together. The scripture saith, "they shall see eye to eye when the Lord shall bring again Zion," Isa. lii. 8. Now if ever that text shall be fulfilled, that as two eyes look both on one object, so the eyes of all saints shall be towards the Lord: there will be a sweet agreement in principles, practice, professions, and affections, as the primitive Christians who were "of one heart and of one soul," Acts iv. 32; then shall "we all come to the unity of the faith," Eph. iv. 13.

7. These congregated saints shall be admitted into one place and state of glory; that is, "before the throne of God, and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them," Rev. vii. 15. These bright stars shall make a glorious constellation in the heavenly firmament: though possibly one star may differ from another star in glory, yet they shall all be irradiated with the Sun of Righteousness: though these vessels of grace be of various quantity, yet they shall all be full in that vast ocean; not the weakest or feeblest shall be lost or left behind, "the feeble among them shall be as David, and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them," Zech. xii. 8. Not a grace or duty; not a mite given in charity shall be lost. Tears shall be found bottled, and a cup of cold water shall be rewarded;* there is room enough in heaven for all the saints, "In my Father's house," saith Christ, "are many mansions," John xiv. 2; many for number, large for extension. The city

* Psal. lvi. 8. Matt. x. 42.

is four square, having twelve gates, filled from all quarters of the world; "the gates of it continually open," never shut.* O the stupendous vastness of that upper region! Earth is but a speck or point, compared to it; though the text in Revelations speak but of twelve thousand furlongs, which, according to some, make but fifteen hundred miles, what is that to heaven? If the city of the great King be meant there by the New Jerusalem, as some think, doubtless it is exceedingly spacious, if indeed it be a place which can be circumscribed: but where the King is, there is the court; as the angels do always behold the face of God, and therefore are still in heaven, though employed about saints on earth;† so it may possibly be with the saints after the resurrection. Who knows whether the purified earth may not be one place of their celestial happiness? yet some think it will be wicked men's hell, and place of torments. But be that as it may, we are sure there is room enough for all the saints in heaven; and our Lord will have them all with him, not a hoof left behind as slighted, for he purchased all at a dear rate, and prayed for them when he was leaving the world. A summary of his present intercession, we have John xvii. particularly verse 24, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." This will be a blessed congregation indeed, a spacious temple, a large paradise, not in corners, houses, or chapels, nor as in the present state where they are often persecuted, fined, and imprisoned; in that world they shall have liberty, yea, possibly every saint shall have his proper mansion, yet in full communion with God, and the rest of glorified spirits.

* Rev. xxi. 10, 12, 25. † Matt. xviii. 10. Heb. i. 14.

CHAP. III.

WHAT IS IMPLIED IN GATHERING THIS ASSEMBLY.

II. It is further proposed, to give a more particular account of the assembling of the saints, and this I shall do in these seven particulars :—

1. That all the saints in the several ages, places, and conditions, wherein they have lived, shall be gathered into one general assembly, may seem strange, but it is true ; all the children of God that ever have lived for five thousand years and upwards, since man was placed on this earthly globe, all that ever have lived, do live, or shall live till the end of time, shall be assembled; such as have lived in far distant places, many thousand miles asunder, separated by vast tracts of ground, mountains, and seas, in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America ; such as have died many thousand years ago, and have been long singing the praises of God and enjoying his presence in the church triumphant, old testament saints, and new testament saints. The children of God in the church militant, yet fighting under the banner of Christ, shall meet with victors that have been long crowned : persons of all conditions, ages, sexes, qualities, rich and poor, old and young ; such as never saw each other's face in this world, no, nor ever heard of each other, yet then they shall meet together, Luke xiii. 29, "They shall come from the east and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God." It is said, Acts ii. 5, "There were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven." But what were they compared with those who shall come out of all countries of the world ; O

what a vast number of souls shall be congregated! such as never appeared together in this lower region. When there shall be a general collection of the human race far beyond what appeared in the theatres, or amphitheatres of the ancient Romans, or armies of Mahometans; "multitudes, multitudes here," as Joel speaks, "in the valley of decision."*

2. That all this congregation shall then be perfectly holy. So it may be truly said of this assembly, as the murmuring princes said of Israel, "All the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them;"† there is not one feeble person among them, no infant of days, but they are grown up to be strong, have become giants in grace; they stand in no need of ordinances; ministerial gifts, and the exercise thereof are "only for perfecting of the saints," Eph. iv. 12. But now they are above them, being perfected; that city "hath no need of the sun, or of the moon to shine in it."‡ As soon as ever the breath departs out of the body of a child of God, he shakes off all sin, and puts on a new garment of perfect holiness; he takes his leave of the body of death and earth together. Not one speck of pollution to be seen upon all this great multitude. Souls take their leave of sin, as they are taking their leave of this world. O what a glorious sight will that be of pure white saints! surely a lovely sight; there will be no pride, passion, or impatience, nor any thing to vex themselves or others. The dregs are left behind, and refined quintescence floats upwards. Consecrated souls are now elevated to the highest pitch, and purified from loathsome and defiling corruptions. O what a blessed day will that be!

3. That all troubles and temptations in this lower world shall then cease. Neither the devil nor wicked

* Joel iii. 14. † Numb. xvi. 3. ‡ Rev. xxi. 23.

men can follow believers off this dunghill, although the devil be called, "the prince of the power of the air,"* yet he cannot stop or hurt the saints as they pass through his dominions; nor shall he shoot a dart at them or after them. All troubles are at an end, death itself, the king of terrors is destroyed, he had no sting to wound the saints before, now he hath no being; the fear of him was gone in some degrees in their lives, now the very thought of him is gone;† they are delivered from the first, as well as the second death; they shall never receive a mortal wound, no, nor any wound; the accuser and abuser of the brethren is cast out, not only cast down, but quite cast out, and all his artillery and his instruments.‡

4. When saints are thus gathered together, they shall know one another. It is true, some kind of imperfect knowledge shall cease, that knowledge which is only acquired in the use of means shall vanish away, 1 Cor. xiii. 8; or that which is seen through a glass darkly, then shall we see face to face, ver. 12. I must needs confess those two words are beyond my comprehension, of "knowing even as we are known, and of seeing God as he is;"‖ and I suspect that no mortal can understand what they mean; but I think the faculties will be strangely enlarged, so that the saints will know all natural things, and pierce into the essence of the most intricate existences, the nature and powers of terrene creatures, the properties of angels, the mysteries of redemption, the counsels of God; though they are not omniscient, their knowledge must be limited, yet I think they will know all the ancient patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David, Paul, Peter, though they had never seen them in this

* Eph. ii. 2. † 1 Cor. xv. 56. Heb. ii. 15.
‡ Rev. xii. 10. ‖ 1 Cor. xiii. 12. I John iii. 2.

world; thus the rich man though lost, knew father Abraham, and Lazarus in his bosom.* Luther in his discourse the night before he died, said that saints shall know one another hereafter: as would appear from Adam's knowing who Eve was, though he had been asleep,† and the disciples knowing Moses and Elias in Christ's transfiguration, Matt. xvii. 3; indeed this mutual knowledge will not be the least part of the saint's heavenly delight.

5. The souls of men live after they are separated from the body. For, what is it that is gathered with the saints? It is not the body, for that is laid in the dust, but it is the soul, for the body and soul meet not till the great day of the resurrection; nor doth the soul sleep in the dust till then, for our Lord said to the penitent thief, "to day shalt thou be with me in paradise;" and Paul desired "to be loosed, that he might be with Christ; nor doth the soul cease to be, it hath an existence in a separate state; men may kill the body, not the soul.‡ Atomists and Epicureans will not admit an annihilation of any one atom in the universe, surely then not this excellent creature, the soul of man. Yea, the soul of man continues its individuality, that is, its distinct being, and falls not into one common universal soul of the world, as some have imagined; spirits have a numerical difference, a distinct being. Nor are we to think that the soul returns into the essence of God, because the text saith, "The spirit returns to God who gave it," Eccl. xii. 7; it doth return to God to receive its sentence from him, not into his being, for then we should make God divisible, and consisting of parts, which is contrary to his infinite, divine nature; thus souls have a distinct being,

* Luke xvi. 23. † Gen. ii. 23.
‡ Luke xxiii. 43. Phil. i. 23. Matt. x. 28.

yet depending on God the first being, as individuals, and must be accordingly judged.

6. That the soul being gathered with the saints, enters immediately into glory. To know where Lazarus's soul was, while he was in the grave, requires more skill than I can pretend to; some think it hovered about the grave by Christ's order, as designing its re-entering the body; but scripture assures us of the immediate salvation of gracious souls, "they enter into peace," when the body rests in its bed, Isa. lvii. 2; they are pronounced "blessed that die in the Lord;* when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we appear with him in glory," Col. iii. 4. Now they shall be glorious in their souls; at the resurrection, their bodies will be glorious, even like Christ's glorious body.† This answers that query, whether the saints shall have greater glory at the resurrection, than they had immediately after their death? It is easy to determine, that so far as there is an addition of a glorified body to the glorified spirit, so far is the glory greater, what further, I know not. Though Dr. Hammond thinks the word ἀνάστασις, translated resurrection, when flesh is not joined to it, signifies, that life which the soul enters upon immediately after death, called resurrection, that is, glorification; certainly the soul hath some intuitive knowledge in its separate state and felicity also, so far as it is capable.

7. When these blessed souls are thus gathered together, they shall never part, they shall live with God and each other for ever. Here we part and meet again, and meet and part again, and part so as that we shall never meet again in this world; but in the other world we shall part no more through the ages of eternity; after millions of years their joys are as fresh as at the first

* Rev. xiv. 12. † Phil. iii. 21.

moment, they are never weary, nor interrupted, they are "before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple;" these waters have a perpetual spring, this day hath no night;* they shall reign with Christ not a thousand years definitely, but for ever and ever. O what a lasting and everlasting enjoyment of God and saints will that be! What can part them? God will not, the devil and wicked men cannot, themselves shall not, for they have within them an incorruptible seed, even of that word "that liveth and abideth for ever," 1 Pet. i. 23. It is not with saints in heaven, as with boon companions in playing, drinking, carousing, and matches of sport and vanity, who must part; nor is it with saints there as with God's children here in the worship of God, who have their intermissions, cessations, and interruptions; but where the work, praising God continues, the place continues, it hath foundations, the persons continue, "he that doth the will of God abideth for ever," 1 John ii. 17.

CHAP. IV.

FOR WHAT END THE SAINTS ARE GATHERED TOGETHER.

III. THE next division has a reference to the end or design of the saints gathering together.

1. The primary and principal design is, the glorifying of God. The great God doth all things for this great end, 2 Thess. i. 10, "When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." The glory of the saints shall reflect glory to

* Rev. vii. 15. xx. 6. xxii. 5.

God. God considers himself honoured in his saints' honours, as the prince is magnified by the splendour of his court: if God be glorified in the bitterest sufferings of his saints, how much more in their exaltation?* O what a lustre will they display, when they are all crowned as kings, when they shall shine as the firmament, as the stars, yea, as the sun in his meridian glory;† O what a wonderful change is this, to be raised out of the dust and from the dunghill, to sit upon thrones? How came this to pass, surely the author of this glory will have the chief share therein, all God's perfections will be conspicuous. The saints' meeting together in the aforesaid manner, will tend to the glory of,

(1.) God's sovereignty, wherein he chose such as were children of wrath even as others, to make them vessels of mercy, and left others as good as they to perish and be banished from God to all eternity; then his eternal counsels will be unfolded, and that scripture fully explained, Rom. ix. 15, 18, 22, 23.

(2.) God's wisdom will be conspicuous in contriving a way for man's redemption and salvation. The wisdom of God is a mystery, "even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory," 1 Cor. ii. 7. Then the secrets of this wisdom will be clearly laid open to angels and men, which now they desire to look into, and to learn more of which they become scholars in the church,‡ Eph. iii. 10.

(3.) The power of God will be displayed bringing poor weak creatures through such a world of difficulties and oppositions, as sheep in the midst of wolves, lions, and bears, in a howling wilderness, even themselves shall wonder how they ever got hither, and shall reflect with pleasure and triumph, that they were "kept

* 1 Pet. iv. 14. † Dan. xii. 3. Matt. xiii. 43. ‡ 1 Pet. i. 12.

by the power of God through faith unto salvation," 1 Pet. i. 5.

(4.) But no attribute of God will shine so bright in that day of the saints' meeting together, as that of his free grace, this orient pearl in the gold ring of glory will shine the brightest. That uphill city is built all of free-stone, none of them had mounted so high, had not the arms of love been under them. When this head-stone of glory is laid, it will be with "shoutings, grace, grace unto it," Zech. iv. 7; the celestial palace will ring with acclamations of grace: grace laid the foundation, and grace lays the topstone in glory. The glorified soul will stand amazed, and say, "who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house that thou hast brought me hitherto?"* and saints and angels will stand gazing at them, and at God in them, that of such polluted creatures hath made such a holy people, that of such lepers so disgusting in appearance he hath advanced many above the ordinary rate of men, "equal unto the angels."† Fellow saints will adore free grace, devils will fret, reprobates gnash their teeth with envy, angels will gladly admit them into their society, and God will be glorified in all.

This is the first and chief end God hath in view in gathering the saints together.

2. There is also a secondary, subordinate end of God's bringing his saints together, and that is for their mutual communion, converse, and society with each other.

Negatively, it will not be,

(1.) To trade, buy and sell, and have civil commerce together, to make great purchases, or to go to fairs and markets, or meet upon exchange for business; there are no such things there; "Nor shall they marry or

* 2 Sam. vii. 18. † Luke xx. 36.

be given in marriage;" nor converse as husband and wives, Luke xx. 35.

(2.) Nor shall they suffer together, or be thrown into prisons, or driven into dens and caves of the earth, to endure hardships, seeking relief, or begging their bread; the devil and his instruments are there nonsuited, "the accuser of the brethren is cast down," Rev. xii. 10; and all his angels and agents.

(3.) Much less shall they sin together, by acts of immorality, or idle talk or chat, there shall not be uttered one vain word to all eternity; nor shall they quarrel, or contend, and thereby grieve and fret or vex the spirits one of another, or sadden the hearts of each other. No, no, there shall be perfection of grace, and complete harmony of minds and affections.

(4.) Nor shall there be one word of complaint as now there is; Christians when they meet here, spend much of their time in mourning over themselves, in mourning over one another, in mutual compassion, confessing their faults to each other, acquainting christian friends with their grievances, begging their advice, and the help of their prayers.* Oh, saith one, I am ignorant, hard-hearted, unbelieving, have a treacherous memory, am very unprofitable. Oh, saith another, I am sore assaulted with Satan's suggestions, and hellish temptations; another saith, I am in the dark, God hides his face, I know not what to make of my condition; another complains of dark providences, and is afraid of missing his way, in such a case; all have their peculiar distresses and grievances; and one while raise their hearts to God, another while to christian friends; but there shall be no such thing as a whimper of complaint, when they meet together in that solemn day.

* James v. 16.

But more positively and affirmatively, the purposes for which the saints shall come together are these two:

To augment their personal felicity, and to enjoy mutual society and intercourse.

With respect to their own personal felicity, they shall assemble,

(1.) To rest together; as their bodies shall rest in the grave, so shall their souls rest with God. This is the time of "refreshing that comes from the presence of the Lord," Acts iii. 19; "Now they rest from their labours,"* painful and marred with sin, never to be pestered any more with the hurries of a distempered world, temptations of a malicious devil, or corruptions of a treacherous heart. Rest is sweet, this rest is most sweet, "when they enter into peace they rest in their beds," Isa. lvii. 2.

(2.) To be rewarded; "great is their reward in heaven," Matt. v. 12. This reward doth greatly animate God's saints amidst their labours and losses, they still "have respect to the recompence of reward," and they shall not be disappointed for it is a sure reward;† and their confidence "hath great recompence of reward," Heb. x. 35. Not from any thing we have done in point of commutative justice, yet by distributive justice, by virtue of God's promise in the new covenant, God will be as good as his word.

(3.) They meet to rejoice together. At present, "they rejoice in hope of the glory of God," Rom. v. 2. But heaven is the true proper element of joy. If at a distance and unseen, the Christian "can rejoice with joy unspeakeable and full of glory," upon the exercise of a faith of adherence; O what joy will the Christian have above; this is an entering into our master's

* Rev. xiv. 13. † Heb. xi. 26. Prov. xi. 18.

joy, because our vessels are too narrow for this joy to enter into us.* O what a transport of joy at the saints' arrival!

(4.) They meet to reign. "The saints of the most high shall take the kingdom and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever," Dan. vii. 18. Rev. xxii. 5. Not only shall godly ministers "receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away;"† but suffering saints shall have a crown of life, "which God hath promised to all that love him," James i. 12. Earthly crowns are but gaudy trifles, compared with this crown that all saints shall receive. This is a high transcendent preferment.

(5.) They meet together to receive their inheritance. At present they are only as children in their minority, but at death they take possession of their rightful inheritance, and it is an "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them," 1 Pet. i. 4. All God's children are heirs, and "heirs according to promise,"‡ and this glory they have hereafter is a "reward of inheritance," Col. iii. 24. The kingdoms of the earth are not to be compared with this blessed inheritance above.

(6.) They meet together to triumph on their blessed conquest. What wonderful triumphers shall saints be hereafter, "who are more than conquerors here?"‖ All the saints shall be clothed with "white robes and have palms in their hands," Rev. vii. 9. O the triumphant song they sing, Rev. xv. 3. It is unintelligible to others, and cannot be learned by any but such as overcome. O happy souls!

(7.) They meet to see the execution of God's vengeance upon the wicked, Jude, 14, 15, "Behold

* Isa. xxxv. 10. 1 Pet. i. 8. Matt. xxv. 21.
† 1 Pet. v. 4. ‡ Gal. iii. 29. ‖ Rom. viii. 37.

the Lord cometh to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly, of their ungodly deeds and hard speeches—the righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance," Psal. lviii. 10. The more the saints' will is melted into God's will, the more satisfaction will they have in the executing of justice, not so much on the wicked considered as God's creatures, but as his enemies, see 2 Thess. i. 6—9.

(8.) They meet for a clear manifestation of their inward principles and outward practices. Saints are called hidden ones,* their best part is most out of sight; "their life is hid with Christ in God, but when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we appear with him in glory," Col. iii. 3, 4. Yea, and the "creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God," Rom. viii. 19. O what a display will there be at that day of men's inward states one to another, never before known, 1 John iii. 1, 2.

(9). They meet to have their graces perfected. Then, and never till then, is the day when that is accomplished, Eph. iv. 12, 13, "The perfecting of the saints; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;" then will every corner of the soul be filled with grace. He that hath "begun a good work in believers here, will perform it till the day of Jesus Christ," Phil. i. 6. Now they have gained what they were pressing after: O blessed day! O happy attainment!

(10.) Yet, once more they meet to enjoy God immediately together. This crowns all the rest, this is the summit of all, the acme and highest felicity of a rational soul. This is what they have been long breathing after. Some glimpses of his blessed face

* Psalm lxxxiii. 3.

they saw through the glass of ordinances, and were thereby "changed into the same image from glory to glory," 2 Cor. iii. 18: that sight of God was only "through a glass darkly, but then it will be face to face," 1 Cor. xiii. 12. "When he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is," 1 John iii. 2. What man dwelling on this side the grave knows the meaning of that word? God said to Moses, thou "canst not see my face;"* it is well if we can see his back: but then the Lord will unveil his face to glorified souls. We cannot tell now how a finite soul is capable of seeing an infinite object; but then as the faculties will be astonishingly enlarged and extended, so this vision will exceed our present low apprehensions. This is called the beatific vision, when it is promised "to the pure in heart that they shall see God;"† and it is this that makes them completely happy. That is one of the sweetest words in the bible, 1 Thess. iv. 17, 18, "Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord, wherefore comfort one another with these words."

CHAP. V.

ON THE INTERCOURSE WHICH THE SAINTS HAVE AT THEIR MEETING TOGETHER.

THE former chapter referred to the principal design of the saints' meeting together, which was the glorify-

* Exod. xxxiii. 20. † Matt. v. 8.

ing of God, and enjoyment of him, in which consists their personal felicity.

The latter concerns their mutual society, and familiar intercourse one with another, which will be an addition to their joy and happiness in those heavenly regions.

Communion of saints is one article of our faith, and the great privilege of believers in this lower world; both that which is catholic with all saints through the world, and that which is personal and immediate with members of the same society. As soon as any man commenceth Christian, he espouseth this communion, Phil. i. 5, "For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now." Wicked men talk of their good fellowship in feasting, drinking, jesting, and gaming, alas, they are all but child's play, yea devil's sport to this, and leave the soul comfortless and guilty; but this fellowship of God's children is delightful, honourable and profitable, a distinctive character of a saint, an emblem of heaven, a step to communion with God.

Yet that fellowship they have in glory far exceeds what they have below, for they are freed from the dregs of corruption and sinful passions, their souls are purified, their graces perfected, and though they be personally different, yet all centre in God.

That the saints above have familiar intercourse one with another, is generally asserted, and very probable; because such a communication must greatly heighten their pleasures and happiness. But how this is carried on, is not so evident; whether it be by imprinting their conceptions on the minds of each of other, as Scotus saith; or by arranging their conceptions in their own minds, and so in some peculiar way representing them by certain forms to others, so Aquinas; or

by forming sounds, which after their way are intelligible. But we that are so much strangers to the nature of spirits, cannot conceive of these things.

Yet after the resurrection, when bodies are united to their souls, possibly they may hold discourse vocally. It must be said, even whilst in this world, in a sound sense, that they "know no man after the flesh," 2 Cor. v. 16; how much less in heaven, when their bodies become spiritual, will they know each other, or confer together in a low sensual manner, as they do here in this world.

Let the more learned read Dr. Tuckney's discourse in his Præl. Theol. page 152—157, upon this question: That the blessed in the state of glory shall know each other,* for which he brings proofs out of scripture, of Dives and Lazarus, and also Moses and Elias at Christ's transfiguration.

But of this I shall say as he does, that this question contains in it a theological truth, not a fundamental article of faith;† not necessary to our salvation, but useful to our edification and consolation.

Now if it be asked, what subjects the saints glorified shall in all probability discourse upon, I confess it is a difficult question; for I find 2 Cor. xii. 4, that when the apostle Paul was caught up into the third heavens, he heard ἀῤῥητα ῥήματα, "wordless words, or words that could not be uttered," or which it is not lawful or possible for a man to utter. God forbid that I should presume to express either the matter or the manner of these conferences above; but words or things they are that are uttered, and we may lawfully conjecture what the saints above converse about, by the

* Beati in statu gloriæ se mutuò sunt agnituri.

† Quod questio ista in se contineat veritatem theologicam, non fundamentalem fidei articulum.

holy laudable discourse they have here; and they may be such as these:—

1. Concerning the work of creation. For though the visible heavens and earth shall be burnt up, yet nevertheless, according to his promise, they shall see new heavens and new earth, wherein dwells righteousness," 2 Pet. iii. 12, 13. Fire purifies, so the visible heavens which were defiled with men's sins, shall be purged with fire, and the "creature shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption.* And O what a fine show will that present? far beyond golden mountains, rocks of pearl or diamonds, or crystal streams; a semblance of it we have in Rev. xxi, which is the wonderful workmanship of the great Creator, enough to employ the eyes and tongues of those celestial inhabitants to the praise of Jehovah, Rev. iv. 9—11: and though the first creation be past away, yet the mighty fabric of this vast universe will possess the thoughts of the saints, with admiration of God's power, wisdom, and holiness which shine therein, and they will review them in discourses one to another, with adoration of God, to the honour of his Majesty.

2. Concerning man's apostacy. How excellently God had placed man in the primitive state of perfection, formed after his own image, adorned with the beauties of holiness, and having "dominion over the works of God's hands."† Yet he unreasonably revolted from God, and rose up in rebellion against him, by violating the moral law engraven on his heart; and the positive law of not eating the fruit of one tree; whereby he utterly ruined all his posterity, made himself and his offspring subject to God's wrath and curse here and hereafter to all eternity. This will be made subser-

* Rev. xviii. 5. Rom. viii. 21. † Psal. viii. 6.

vient to the advancement of free grace in our deliverance out of it.

3. Especially the saints will discourse on the means of our redemption. The infinite wisdom, grace and love displayed in God's contrivance of it; the transcendent love, care, and faithfulness of Christ in the management of it, the nature, birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Son of God, his offices, suited to our state, and all his mediatorial undertakings. This will be a voluminous book for saints to read, fairly written in indelible characters; and the glorious object before their eyes, at the right hand of God, in heavenly places, above principalities, to be a perpetual monitor of his glorious transactions.* This will be the subject of triumphant praise among the celestial inhabitants to all eternity, Rev. v. 8—14.

4. The privileges of believers, the blessed fruits of Christ's purchase. Now they shall more fully understand and form a due estimate of the benefits of reconciliation, justification, and adoption, peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost; these privileges will be the topics of discourse one to another; they will say, O what blessed effects of divine grace! We enjoyed them, but did not duly conceive of them, now we see what it is to be the children of God, to be justified and sanctified; these were greater mercies than we were aware of. Let us cast our eye back, and consider what we were once, what fools, what vile creatures, but how we "were washed, sanctified, justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," 1 Cor. vi. 11. Ah, what a pleasant theme is this!

5. The ordinances enjoyed. Oh, how many affecting sermons have we heard! How often have we

* Eph. i. 20, 21.

been feasted together at the Lord's table! What sweet fellowship have we had with the saints in the lower world! Many a heart-melting fast, many a soul-refreshing thanksgiving, many an edifying, heart-warming conference; I could then say, "it was good for me to draw nigh to God."* Those duties led us to this glory. God helped us to improve ordinances, and now we are got quite above ordinances.

6. The difficulties of their pilgrimage. While the saints stand on the shore of eternity, and look back on the stormy tempestuous sea they have passed, the pirates, rocks, and sands they have escaped, by the conduct of the great Pilot, it fills them with admiration and astonishment. How many raging devils, and furious onsets of men, what temptations and persecutions they have passed through? What hard duties they have performed, what corruptions they have mortified, what burdens they have borne? all these exalt their joy to a high pitch.

7. Ministers and their hearers will communicate their former experiences. O, will the convert say, it was a blessed day that ever I saw such a minister's face, or heard his voice; I remember the text, the doctrine, the particular, that first touched my heart; "I sat under the shadow with great delight, the fruit was sweet to my soul,"† God healed me by the same hand that wounded me; possibly the minister never knew till now all the souls he hath been an instrument to convert. Now they have a reciprocal joy, when "sower and reaper rejoice together," John iv. 36.

8. Pious relations will mutually reflect on days that are past, though now not as husband and wife, yet as formerly in that relation. They "were heirs together of the grace of life,‡" prayed, wept, suffered, and

* Psal. lxxiii. 28. † Cant. ii. 3. ‡ 1 Pet. iii. 7.

sweetly conversed together, the father wept over the miscarrying child and prevailed with God, his miscarriages cost him dear, but his conversion was as life from the dead, that was a costly child. How the child makes his reflections, recounts the pious father's and mother's prayers and tears, counsels and admonitions.

9. The distinction grace has made betwixt them and others. Such a one was as well born, bred, educated as we, was sometimes under convictions, and sat under the same means of grace, was of fine parts, made a profession, and was once as likely for heaven as I, but fell into gross sin, or kept on in a course of formality, and he is now consigned to eternal torments, why am not I in his case? "Who made us to differ?"* It was nothing but free grace that gave me a repenting heart: I was as likely to perish as he, and as unable to help myself as he.

10. Christians will discourse on the various providences of God in this world. I was sick, and the Lord raised me up; had I died then, I had been undone, for I was in a graceless state. God "in faithfulness afflicted me,"† I had perished, if I had not perished; I was wandering, and God brought me home by the painful cross; I had not been thus happy, if I had not been miserable; all things did work for my good. The Lord supplied my wants, supported me in troubles, vouchsafed many mercies in my pilgrimage, whereby he rendered my condition comfortable: many a particular dispensation of providence will be then laid open to others.

11. The seasons of special enlargement. They will then declare what God hath done for their souls. Many things that passed betwixt God and their souls, that were not fit to be divulged in this world, will then

* 1 Cor. iv. 7. † Psal. cxix. 75.

be laid open to the glory of God, and their own and others' joy and abundant content, as those two disciples said, Luke xxiv. 32, "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way?" O, what sweet intercourse with God had my soul in such a chamber, closet; there did he give me his heart, and I gave him mine:* it was a little corner of heaven. Such an ordinance or opportunity, was as one of the days of heaven; I could have been content there.

12. Lastly, They will discourse on the felicity to which they are now advanced, and the perpetuity of it. This state is beyond "what eye hath seen, ear heard, or could enter into the heart of man;"† little, ah little did I then know of what I now enjoy; one hour in this blissful state, compensates for all my days of service or suffering. O that I had done more for God! I am, saith Luther, ashamed that God should so abundantly reward so little work: but God acts like himself, I did but little for God, but God doth much for me. Who would not serve such a master? My sufferings were but light and momentary, but this is a far more "exceeding and eternal weight of glory."‡ O what a bountiful master have we served. Nor is this for a short season, to have an end, but it is lasting, everlasting; it would damp our joy, if we were in danger of losing this felicity; but let us take courage, we shall never be expelled out of this our paradise as Adam was out of his. This happiness shall run parallel with the life of God, and line of eternity.

You will say, how do you know that this shall be their discourse, have you been there to hear it, or who told you?

I answer, no; but we may rationally infer so much, partly from some general hints in scripture, and partly

* Cant. vii. 12. † 1 Cor. ii. 9. ‡ 2 Cor. iv. 17.

from their profitable and comfortable discourse on earth, which will then be heightened; and, indeed, because they shall speak and do such things as most tend to the glory of God, and their own greater joy and felicity.

CHAP. VI.

IN WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES THE SAINTS SHALL BE GATHERED TOGETHER UNTO CHRIST, AND REASONS WHY THEY MUST BE GATHERED TOGETHER.

IV. Our attention may now be directed to the circumstances in which the saints are gathered together unto Christ, and the reasons of their assembling.

I must confess, interpreters greatly differ about the meaning of these words, ἢ ἡμῶν ἐπισυναγωγῆς ἐπ' αὐτὸν, which some interpret of meetings of Christians together in assemblies, Heb. x. 25. And so render ἐπ' αὐτὸν, *propter ipsum*, as James ii. 7, "that worthy name," τὸ ἐπικληθὲν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς, "which is called upon you." So they will have this to refer to the free liberty of Christians, in uninterrupted meetings in countries and cities, after the scattering of the Jewish nation who censured Christians as a wicked sect; but in the days of Vespasian and Titus, and especially in Constantine's time, they enjoyed liberty of meeting together for celebrating God's public worship. So indeed, συνερχεσθαι, and συνάγειν, *convenire*, *congregare*, in a public edict signify: but most take it for that general or rather universal meeting at Christ's second coming in the air at the last day, 1 Thess. iv. 14, 17, when all the people

of God shall be gathered to Christ. Now this gathering of saints to Christ doth comprehend these four things:—*The state and qualification of the object—The reason or relation betwixt them—The frame and disposition of the subject—The sight, vision, or fruition of Christ.* I shall very briefly consider these.

1. The state and qualification of the object, that is, Christ, under a double notion: namely, as God and man; and, as advanced to the right hand of God.

(1.) They shall be gathered to him as God and man, which is a state of the highest perfection. Completely perfect man, as glorious a creature as Adam in innocence, and yet much more endeared to his saints, by their reflecting on what he hath done and suffered for them and the fruits thereof; this is he of whom it is said, when he "bringeth in his first begotten into the world, he saith, and let all the angels of God worship him," Heb. i. 6. How admirable is his person, constituted of two natures, divine and human! never did created or uncreated existence present such a person, in whom all perfections meet, in whom all excellences are united.

(2.) As exalted to the right hand of God. They are not now to be gathered to Christ, as he was in his state of humiliation, when multitudes flocked to his preaching, when he was but in the form of a servant, or going to suffer on the cross, no, nor yet in his state of transfiguration, which was glorious, yet temporary: but now he "is set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high," Heb. i. 3. God hath now given him "a name above every name, far above all principalities and powers, and hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be the head over all things to the church,"* Eph. i. 20—22. It is this state of

* Phil. ii. 9, 10.

glory in which Christ is enthroned, and now receiving homage from all ranks of creatures, attended with innumerable angels; it is Christ in this glorious state, to whom the saints are to be gathered.

2. The reason thereof, which consists in the relations between Christ and his saints, all which carry abundance of delight and sweetness in them. For, it is not as strangers or enemies that love him not, nor yet as malefactors brought to the bar, that dread him as judge: but they are gathered to Christ under these important relations:

(1.) As sheep connected with their shepherd, whose voice they "know here, and whom they follow," John x. 3, 4; yea, they own him with a more than ordinary endearedness, because he laid down his life for the sheep, verse 15, and carries the "poor lambs in his arms,"* and leads them to quiet resting places, where "they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid."†

(2.) As soldiers gathered to their captain, not to fight, but to take the spoil; the Captain of our "salvation is made perfect through sufferings," he is now "crowned with glory and honour, and brings many sons unto glory," Heb. ii. 9, 10. He marks out a crown for every soldier, and sets the victorious champion with him on his own throne, Rev. iii. 21.

(3.) As scholars to their master, who sets them not in a low form, as under graduates, but they commence the highest degree of perfection in the university of glory, to know as much as creatures are capable of knowing, "they shall know as they are known," 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Now the believer is a vessel unto honour, meet for his master's use, set on the shelf of glory.‡

(4.) As subjects to their prince, to be introduced

* Isa. xl. 11. † Ezek. xxxiv. 28. ‡ 2 Tim. ii. 21.

into the king's presence chamber. Not any longer to be banished into a foreign country; no, nor yet to be retainers, hanging about the court at a distance, but approaching into the king's presence. Jesus Christ is in the immediate presence of God, saints shall be with him;* in "whose presence is fulness of joy, at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore," Ps. xvi. 11.

(5.) As friends to a feast. Our Lord called and accounted all his saints friends in this world, and he deals familiarly with them, providing for them a feast of fat things; but there will come a day when he will "drink new wine with them in his father's kingdom." O blessed feast! O happy society! When he will say, "eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved."†

(6.) As children are gathered to their father, not only to receive a blessing, but to take full possession of their inheritance, "knowing that of the Lord, ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ." All God's sons are heirs, and then it will be manifest who are sons; that is a blessed word, "*He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.*"‡

(7.) As members are united, Eph. v. 30, "for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Now alas, the members are oft disjointed from each other, and too much distant from the head, but there will come a day when they shall be joined all in one; there will then be no discrepancy betwixt head and members, they being grown "up into him in all things, which is the head even Christ," Eph. iv. 15, 16.

Thus much for the relation they have to Christ, which is the reason of this gathering together to him.

* Heb. ix. 24. † John xv. 14, 15. Matt. xxvi. 29. Cant. v. 1.
‡ Col. iii. 24. Rom. viii. 17. 1 John iii. 2. Rev. xxi. 7.

3. The frame and disposition of the subject. There is in every child of God, a kind of natural propensity, which inclines them in a peculiar manner towards Christ, as the needle towards the loadstone, by which they move and bend heaven-wards; "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, saith David," Psal. cxvi. 7. As all creatures move to their centre, so doth the sincere soul God-wards; and can never be at rest, till it be closely joined and adhere to him, and that God who hath fixed these innate principles in the soul, will promote and perfect them. Now this frame and disposition of a child of God, proceeds first, from the convictions of conscience, and deficiency he finds in other things: secondly, from a sensible experience that the soul hath of satisfaction in Christ.

(1.) The consciences of God's children are fully satisfied, that all the world cannot give the least solid satisfaction to their souls. This made Solomon cry out, "vanity of vanities, all is vanity;"* the Christian cries out, away with these toys, worldly enjoyments are not commensurate to the desires of an immortal soul, Matt. xvi. 26. The judgment is convinced that the "world passeth away, and the lust thereof," 1 John ii. 17; all the splendor of the world fades, there is a vanity and emptiness in all sublunary things. That is the Christian's motto: "I wish not for, I am not content with worldly perishable things;"† I must look beyond the moon to heaven for felicity; I have sucked the juice of every flower in this garden of the world, yet my soul is empty.

(2.) Tue Christian hath tasted that the Lord is gracious, and this sets him a longing and hungering for more grace and incomes from above, 1 Pet. ii. 2, 3. The Gauls having tasted the delicious wine of the grapes that grew in Italy, were never at rest till they

* Eccl. i. 2. † Non est mortale quod opto.

had conquered the country. So it is with the pious soul, sense brings the clearest evidence, especially spiritual senses, for some natural senses may be deceived, "this I pray," saith the apostle, "that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment," Phil. i. 9; ἐν πάσῃ αἰσθήσει, in all sense, for the soul hath its senses as well as the body, and being sanctified and duly exercised, they discern between good and evil;* and indeed this is the proper genius of the new creature, to press forwards and aspire upwards, Rom. viii. 23, "we which have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body." There are heaven-born principles implanted in believing souls, that make them soar aloft after the enjoyment of God.

4. The gathering to Christ, includes the sight, vision and fruition of Christ, the full enjoyment of him; beholding God is properly fruitive vision of him; "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," Matt. v. 8. This is not in the way of mere speculation, but fruition; if "we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him," Rom. vi. 8. This is by the sight of him, and appearing with him in glory," Col. iii. 4. This blissful sight of Christ, is that which makes heaven, for where the king is, there is the court; this glory consists in conformity to him, and communion with him. This is to be gathered to Christ, that is, to have Christ fully revealed to us, an approach to him under the dearest relations, the soul disposed and duly qualified to enjoy him, and full vision and fruition of him. If any of these be wanting, we cannot in a scripture sense be gathered to Christ.

Another consideration is, why our Lord will thus gather his saints at the last day.

* Heb. v. 14.

Though I have touched on some things already, that might be improved as reasons, yet I shall add,

1. Because this is the good pleasure of God. "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day;" how careful is God of his jewels, he will gather them and make them up carefully; to be sure he will neither keep them out, nor cast them out. "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth, and will own them that are his," 2 Tim. ii. 19; "the election must obtain salvation;"* it runs invisible, much under ground, but will appear at last in the mansions above.

2. Because this is the fruit of Christ's purchase; "For Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God;" he is the ladder of Jacob, upon whom believers ascend to glory. This was the end of his reconciling us by his blood, to "present us holy, unblamable, and unreprovable in his sight;" our Lord will not lose the fruits of his purchase: yea, he follows it with his prayer, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am;"† God always hears him.

3. Because of the sanctifying and sealing work of the Spirit. "God," saith the apostle, "hath chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth;" observe it, sanctification and salvation, have an inseparable connexion. Saints in the old testament and in the new have the "same spirit of faith," this animates all the members of Christ, running through the veins of his mystical body; and this is the "seal and earnest of our future inheritance;"‡

* John vi. 39. Mal. iii. 17. John vi. 37. Rom. xi. 7.
† 1 Pet. iii. 18. Col. i. 20—22. John xvii. 24.
‡ 2 Thess. ii. 13. 2 Cor. iv. 13. i. 22. Eph. i. 13, 14.

to be sure God will not lose his earnest, or throw it into hell.

4. Saints shall be gathered together to Christ, because they are all included in the same bond of the everlasting covenant; it is called the "bond of the covenant;" and by this covenant all the saints become "one stick in the Lord's hand." Suppose abundance of twigs be bound up together, yet they all make up but one bundle, many stones make but one building, many inhabitants make but one city or kingdom. All saints are fellow citizens; God will not part them either in this or in the other world. Sincere and persevering souls, shall all meet before the throne, to sing hallelujahs with harmonious melody. All the saints through the world are children of the same father, God; yea, they that "are of faith, are children of Abraham,"* in a spiritual sense; one "household of faith—fellow heirs of the same body—fellow servants—brethren in Christ, faithful brethren—fellow citizens with the saints—and of the household of God.† Such special relations call for this congregating: no doubt they must be gathered together at last.

CHAP. VII.

INFERENCES DRAWN FROM THE PRECEDING DISCUSSION ON THE SUBJECT OF SAINTS BEING GATHERED TOGETHER.

THE improvement I shall make of this subject shall be first, for information in these ten inferences:

* Ezek. xx. 37. xxxvii. 17. Eph. ii. 19—22. Gal. iii. 7.
† Gal. vi. 10. Eph. iii. 6. Col. i. 7. i. 2. Eph. ii. 19.

1. That God is omniscient and omnipotent. Known "unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world," Acts xv. 18. He is infinite in knowledge and wisdom, he takes account of the meanest creatures, and is of infinite power to gather them up; these are the Lord's people, and his inheritance, which he hath redeemed by his "mighty power and stretched out arm," Deut. ix. 29. As God brought his Israel out of Egypt, so he exerted the same power in bringing them into Canaan, and the same power that converted sinners, will also save them; for they are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation," 1 Pet. i. 5.

2. That Jesus Christ is a complete Saviour. He "is able to save to the uttermost," Heb. vii. 25, εἰς τὸ παντελὲς, every way, to all intents and purposes, soul and body, in all cases, difficulties, and conditions, and under all dispensations. Yet it hath a further meaning; he is able to save totally, finally, perfectly, and perpetually, so as none shall need to come after him, to finish what he hath begun; yet further, he saves, so as he shall never cease to be a Saviour to all eternity: for, though he finished his suffering on earth, and his crowning work will terminate at the great day of judgment, yet felicity will emanate from him, through the ages of eternity; as he shall be looked on as the author, so he will be the medium of their happiness, and embrace them in the arms of his love for evermore.

3. That death is not terrible to a gracious person. It is true, to nature it may well be called "the king of terrors;"* it is a dissolving of this compound, man; but it is the shell and clothing of the soul that is laid by, an elementary composition that is dissolved, the soul is thereby set at liberty and takes its flight into

* Job xviii. 14.

another world, a world of spirits; a better state than here: death is but a bridge, a porter that opens the door to heaven. Christ hath deprived death of his sting, perfumed the grave, and made it a means of manumission into the blessed society of God, angels, and saints, thousands better than we are gone; who are we to be exempted? It is no untrodden path, our best friends are above, let us not be afraid to follow them.

4. That heaven is a capacious place. All the saints in the old testament are gone thither, and millions, in new testament days, have ascended to glory, "a hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of Israel," and a "great multitude which no man could number," Rev. vii. 4, 9. Moses and Elias came from heaven at Christ's transfiguration; Abraham in glory, and all his spiritual offspring, which makes a vast number; yet there is room enough left in those fair mansions above. How small a point is this habitable world compared with heaven, where there are an "innumerable company of angels and spirits of just men made perfect." Yet none refused or kept out that are written "in the "Lamb's book of life." Heaven is capable of entertaining all the sons of God, it is a universal receptacle for all pilgrims and strangers here on the earth.*

5. No unclean thing shall enter heaven; nothing that defileth. No dogs shall tread on that golden pavement, "without are dogs;" as large as it is, wicked, graceless sinners shall not creep or crowd into it: our Lord keeps the keys of paradise in his own hands, he cannot be guilty of an oversight, for his eyes are "like a flame of fire,"† none can give him the slip clandestinely, he knows them that are his, and he disowns others; "for without holiness no man shall see the

* Heb. xii. 22. xi. 13. † Rev. xxi. 27. xxii. 15. ii. 18.

Lord," Heb. xii. 14. Grace and glory go hand in hand; unconverted sinners cannot more easily enter heaven (continuing so) than devils or lost souls. Persons must be gathered by conversion, or not gathered by salvation.

6. Saints glorified, shall retain their intelligence and some kind of sensation, as they shall intuitively see God, "know as they are known,"* discern spiritual mysteries more clearly than ever. So they shall have some kind of sense and feeling, from whence come love, joy, delight; for the soul loses not the exercise of its essential faculties, for want of bodily organs. These operations of the soul in the flesh, are but imperfect shadows of intelligence and volition above, and so of the excellent sense and affections of love and joy, which we now cannot clearly conceive of here below. See this fully treated in Mr. Baxter's "Dying Thoughts," page 201.

7. The saints in heaven will know one another. The disciples knew Moses and Elias; and those that never saw one another's faces in this world shall meet together with great content: and this shall be no small part of their happiness, when they shall say, there stand holy Enoch, righteous Noah, grieving Lot, believing Abraham, upright David, patient Job, penitent Peter, zealous Paul, the beloved, amiable disciple John, victorious champions, and my glorious companions for ever; and we together are perfected and glorified: O happy day! blessed meeting!

8. The multitudes enjoying God in heaven, will be no diminution of their joy. Those thousands of eyes beholding the sun, do not diminish its light; the king is not less dignified for his courtiers beholding him; the King of heaven can give content to all the celestial inhabitants; all the saints shall bathe in this delightful

* Matt v. 8. 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

river, and drink "abundantly of the fountain of life;"* nor will the different degrees of glory create discontent or envy in such as have less, for every vessel shall be as full as it can hold. The celestial courtiers want nothing, God shall be all in all;† it is thought, that such as had more grace, and had done God more service here, shall shine brighter than others, from Dan. xii. 3. 1 Cor. xv. 41. But yet there shall be no emulation, nay, they will rather rejoice in each other's graces and glory.

9. That in heaven there will be a mutual and reciprocal exchange of gifts and graces. And this will be no small part of their comfort; O what embraces! what endearedness of affection! what inlettings into each other's hearts! As the sun shineth on the stars, so the stars shine on each other; God doth abundantly irradiate their souls, and they comfort one another's; not but that there is enough in God to delight them, but this is in some respect accumulative. The saints above will look on each other's grace as if it were their own; yea, there will be a mutual aptitude and disposition to serve each other, and contribute to each other's felicity.

10. The sweet harmony of spirits will be inconceivable melody in heaven, far beyond the music of the spheres. Those blessed inhabitants shall be filled with the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace,‡ then they shall indeed speak among themselves, in "psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in their hearts to the Lord," Eph. v. 18, 19. Then they shall with one mind and one mouth glorify God;‖ not one jarring string in the heavenly concert; their hearts will be centred on God, and their lines tending

* Psal. xvi. 11. xxxvi. 9.
† 1 Cor. xv. 28.
‡ Gal. v. 22.
‖ Rom. xv. 6.

towards each other. O blessed day, when there will be no jars or wranglings, but Luther and Calvin will sweetly agree, when Melancthon and Zuinglius will eagerly unite to celebrate the praises of our common Lord. O delightful and blessed day!

CHAP. VIII.

REPREHENSION AND CONVICTION OF CARELESS AND GRACIOUS SOULS.

THE subject tends to produce conviction in such as are regardless of religion, and in pious persons.

First, Among those who are unconverted and regardless of religion.

Must there be a gathering together of saints, and only saints, what then will become of the wicked? they are not to be gathered with saints, they cared not for their company here, and they shall not have their society in the other world.

1. Wicked men shall be banished from among the saints, this is no small punishment. "He shall set the sheep on the right hand, and the goats on the left," Matt. xxv. 32, 33; "He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." In this world they were mingled together, in the same kingdom, city, house, assembly, and none was able to distinguish them; mere professors of religion were taken to be as devout as the best, and they took themselves to be as good as any; but now they shall be detected, and the rottenness of their hearts shall be laid open before themselves, angels, and men, "and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh," so says the

evangelical prophet, Isa. lxvi. 24. This will be none of the least of wicked men's punishment to see those whom they had scorned, slighted, and censured, as not worthy of human society, to ascend, and sit down with "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; and the children of the kingdom," those church-members "to be cast out into outer darkness," Matt. viii. 11, 12. O sad parting, never to meet again! How will the wicked wish they had lived in prisons, poverty, and wretched straits in this world, if only they might now go along with them into glory! O that we had spent our time in prayer, reading, meditation, conference, and works of mortification, as these holy souls did, then had we been happy, as they are; but now we see our loss; we thought your life madness, but now we are convinced of our folly, and the wisdom of your choice.

2. These poor graceless souls must be for ever banished from the eternal God, the fountain of all happiness. They bade God depart, "depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," Job xxi. 14. If not in so many words, yet virtually by their works; and now God will say, "Depart from me, ye cursed," Matt. xxv. 41,—the most dreadful word in the bible, the most overwhelming sentence that can come out of the mouth of God, or can be heard by the ears of men. The enjoyment of God is the saints' heaven, banishment from God is the wicked's hell; yea, the very hell of hells, the only venom, sting, and poison of that infernal lake. They that are not gathered to God, are separated from God; and once banished, and for ever banished; they cannot be removed from his avenging justice, but from his comforting love; "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and

from the glory of his power," 2 Thess. i. 9. The pain of loss is greater than the pain of sense. O dreadful case! Now poor sinners will be banished from the beatific presence, and shall never more see God or Christ to their comfort. O wretched state! sinners shall then know what the loss of God meaneth. They gathered themselves together under ordinances, but desired not God's presence in ordinances; they know not what communion with God means, but they shall know what separation from God means. Where love ended, wrath begins, fury comes in the room of mercy; "Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver," Psal. l. 22.

3. Wicked men shall be bound up together in bundles, and cast into the fire of hell; so saith the text, Matt. xiii. 30, "In the time of harvest, I will say to the reapers, gather ye together, first, the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them." And why in bundles? will this be any ease to them in torments? They are wont to say, here, Neighbours' fare is good fare; but it will be otherwise there, the sight of each other will increase their torment, where they shall reflect upon their guilt together, how they tempted others, and were tempted by others to sin; Thou wast one instrument to bring me into this place of torment. O that I had never known thee! Now merry companions will be torturing company; their sweet meat must have sour sauce. This, this is the dreadful consequence of their mad frolics. It is thought, that this was the reason why the rich man was loth that his five brethren should come to him in hell; not from love to them, for there is no such charity in the realms of woe, but self-love, lest their presence should aggravate his torments. Hence is the "gnashing of teeth" also mentioned,* for

* Luke xvi. 28. Matt. xiii. 50.

spleen and spite both against themselves, and against each other; as communion advanceth the saint's glory above, so the company of old sinners aggravates the misery of the wicked in hell.

4. It will greatly aggravate wicked men's torment to consider, that this was their own doing. "Their destruction is of themselves;"* they can blame none but themselves though they had many incentives and temptations. Neither the devil nor wicked men could ever push them into hell against their will: God saith, "He wills not the death of a sinner." Jesus Christ expressed his earnest desire for their salvation by his death; the Spirit came with his kind suggestions and impulses; pious ministers and christian friends prayed for them, and took pains with them to save them, so that our Lord himself saith, Matt. xxiii. 37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not?" There was God's gathering time of mercy, but that is past; now there is a gathering time of wrath, when the "chaff must be burnt in unquenchable fire." They might have been happy, but would not. "They observed lying vanities, and forsook their own mercies;"† now there is no remedy. They chose the things "wherein he delighted not," and now "he will choose their delusions," Isa. lxvi. 3, 4. Alas, poor sinners choose the devil's drudgery here, and God gives them up into his hands, to be tormented for ever; and as Christ will gather up his saints, whom he purchased, so the devil will gather up all his slaves, not one shall escape him; the wicked are gathered by death to their master, and to their proper place, as it is said of Judas, "That he went to his own place;"‡ that is, hell: "for

* Hos. xiii. 9. † Matt. iii. 12. Jonah ii. 8. ‡ Acts i. 25.

the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God," Psal. ix. 17. O, what a vast assembly will that be! millions, millions of souls descend down into that place of torment! "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat," Matt. vii. 13. O tremble, lest you be found among the greater number of the sons of men.

Remember, all mankind have their faces hell-wards, when they are born: "The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies—There is none righteous, no not one; we are altogether become unprofitable,"* without a saving turn we are all marching hell-ward, and must be gathered together, and, like faggots, piled up in that infernal region, but especially such as have improved the stock of original corruption in a course of profane swearing, rioting, drunkenness, mocking of religion, ridiculing preciseness, condemning the righteous, and justifying the wicked. How can such as these expect to be gathered with the saints in the other world, whom they cannot endure in this? Surely the pious and wicked go contrary ways, when they go off the stage of this world into an eternal state.

Secondly, As the state of wicked, graceless persons is sad and hopeless, if they continue such, so also professed Christians, yea, real saints are in some things faulty, and blame-worthy.

1. Shall there be a gathering together at last, then how unaccountable are those distances, animosities, and heart-burnings among Christians? There is utterly a fault among us. How contrary is this to Christian love, so often recommended by Christ and his apostles? Yea, our Lord hath made it the cha-

* Rom. iii. 10—12.

racteristic of his disciples "to love one another," John xiii. 35. It was wont to be said of the primitive Christians by heathens, see how they love one another! But alas, brotherly love doth not continue! It hath been declared, to the scandal of our noble profession, "That there are contentions among us."* Further, it hath been said, that where strictest professors fall out, they are most implacable; drunkards will sooner be friends than these puritans. God forbid it should be true; God forbid that there should be "debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, tumults, swellings."† Alas, that such unbecoming fruits of the flesh should be found among us! There hath been too much of this evil spirit; O let us take heed, "lest if we bite and devour one another, we be consumed one by another," Gal. v. 15. These are the devil's artillery, whereby he fights, and too often prevails to do abundance of mischief, and hinder much good; "For where envy and strife is, there is confusion, and every evil work."‡ How can you think of the day of meeting one another in heaven with such peevish spirits? Will you perpetuate your quarrels into another world? Are you children of peace that thus quarrel? For shame, lay aside your differences, or lay aside your profession of this gospel of peace.

2. If the saints be gathered at last, why do they not keep close together in this world? What unaccountable separations do men make from each other upon small occasions? This duty of christian intercourse has been practised by all the saints in all ages; the primitive Christians continued stedfastly in the "Apostles' doctrine and fellowship," Acts ii. 42. As soon as Paul was converted, he assayed "to join himself to the disciples," and others "consorted with Paul and

* 1 Cor. i. 11. † 2 Cor. xii. 20. ‡ James iii. 16.

Silas."—"The Philippians were in the fellowship of the gospel from the first day of their conversion."* Like will adhere to like: it is natural for a child of God to hold close communion with his Father's children. How comes it to pass, then, that some that profess themselves Christians keep at a distance? Alas, have you the same name, nature, and divine image, and do you not care for their company? How will you like to live with them for ever in heaven, that love not their society on earth? How comes it to pass that you keep off? It is possible some do it out of modesty, they may think they are not worthy to associate with them; these are but few. Others out of singularity, retiredness; they can find none good enough, to whom they think fit to vouchsafe intimate familiarity. Others have a pique against such and such Christians, or against the whole party, and most hold off from supine negligence, carelessness, and oscitancy; most men are unconcerned about their edification. How unwilling are some Christians to be drawn to the communion of saints? If it be an article in their creed, it is no part of their practice, as though they had never subscribed to it; yea, there are some, that were once forward for embracing opportunities of christian communion, that are now fallen off, like those Hebrews that believed, of whom the apostle saith, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is," Heb. x. 25. The Donatists of old, and the sectaries of late, have made dreadful rents and schisms in the church; the more holy Christians are, the more catholic spirits they have. They are most likely to be sensual, that needlessly "separate themselves, not having the Spirit," Jude, 19, however they may boast themselves to be more full of

* Acts ix. 26. xvii. 4. Phil. i. 5.

the Spirit than others they separate from. Well, sirs, consider what you do, how you injure yourselves, weaken your brethren's hands, sadden their hearts, yea, you weaken the interests of religion hereby. What, friends, shall one heaven hold you, and cannot one church hold you? Do you look for comfort at Christ's second coming among his saints, and will you not keep "by the footsteps of the flock?" The Lord awaken you.

3. Some Christians make nothing of offending the saints of God, whom they should not offend; that is an awful expression, Matt. xviii. 6, "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones, which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." I confess this is spoken of open and violent persecutors, whom our Lord will banish among the pushing goats. But even Christians are too apt to offend one another; sometimes by provoking words, sometimes by offensive behaviour, doing what in consequence of which, (however it seem indifferent to us,) a "brother stumbleth, or is offended, or made weak," Rom. xiv. 21. Unadvised walking may hinder much good, occasion much evil, at least may make sad the hearts of those whose hearts God would not have made sad. With what comfort or confidence will you look in the faces of those whom you have justly offended? An eminent divine saith,* if it be my weakness, I have much ado to think but some shame with confusion will accompany me, when I first meet any there, that I have been unkind to, or wronged, or that will know my faults better than here they did, and that I shall ask them forgiveness, which will be soon granted, being

* Mr. Baxter in a Letter prefixed to Mr. Burgess's book on Christian Commemoration.

forgiven by Christ. However matters will go then, it becomes all the saints to be very cautious, lest they should encroach on the holiness and comfort of their fellow members on earth, and to say with Paul, 1 Cor. viii. 13, "Wherefore if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." Happy are they that neither give offence carelessly, nor take offence causelessly.

4. Yet still there is a great, if not greater fault, of good people, and that is, to be too familiar with wicked men, to comply too far with sinners, to the dishonour of God, scandal of religion, and wronging of their own consciences. Paul writes, and writes again, "not to keep company with fornicators;"* the word is very emphatical, συναναμίγνυσθαι, not to be mingled with them by intimate familiarity, as streams of water mix together; but Christians must be like oil, that will not mix with water; especially they must not be familiar with scandalous professors of the true religion, or such as be disorderly persons, idle, busy-bodies, disobedient to the word; sound, close-walking Christians must "note a man of this description, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed," 2 Thess. iii. 11, 14. Brand such a one as infamous, discover a strangeness in your carriage to him, ἵνα ἐντραπῇ, that he may turn into himself, and consider what in him may be the cause of this your alienation from him. Such a recognition may become a means of his repentance; whereas if you still smile upon him, as if you saw nothing amiss in him, you do but harden him in sin. Yet there is something worse in your sinful compliance, you contract guilt to your own souls, and are in danger of being infected by others, and so partake of their sins,

* 1 Cor. v. 9, 11.

and of their plagues. How often doth God give this call, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord—what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?* Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but reprove them rather," Eph. v. 11. How often doth David bid wicked men depart from him? and if they will not be gone, he will flee from them as from a pest house; Psal. xxvi. 4, 5, "I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. I have hated the congregation of evil doers, and will not sit with the wicked." And then he prays, ver. 9, "Gather not my soul with sinners." O friends, tremble to be found among wicked men in the gathering day.

CHAP. IX.

ON THE QUESTION, WHETHER WE SHALL BE GATHERED WITH SAINTS?

ANOTHER thing suggested, is to ascertain, whether we be the persons that shall be gathered to Christ with the rest of his saints in that solemn day of his appearing.

1. You may know whether you be of that number or not; assurance is possible, and attainable; God's children have obtained it, 2 Cor. v. 1, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." We can be well content to forego this tottering cottage, because we are

* Rev. xviii. 4. 2 Cor. vi. 14, 17.

well assured of a celestial palace; there we shall lodge with God, Christ, angels, and glorified spirits for ever.

2. Nor is this assurance communicated by divine revelation only, but may be obtained in the diligent use of God's appointed means, hearing the word, prayer, meditation, exciting and exercising of grace, holy warfare, and victory over temptations and corruptions, walking close with God, and particularly by a practical syllogism, where the word of God is the major, conscience the minor, and the Spirit makes the conclusion. Thus, such whose eyes are opened, who are turned from "darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, shall have an inheritance among them that are sanctified," Acts xxvi. 18. Next, conscience brings in the minor, I have found my heart and life thus changed by conversion; then the Holy Spirit brings in the inference or conclusion, therefore I do groundedly hope, I shall obtain the inheritance of glory with the rest of the saints. This is called the witnessing of the Spirit "with our spirits that we are the children of God," Rom. viii. 16.

3. Therefore it is the duty of all Christians to endeavour after it, we are commanded to "give diligence to make our calling and election sure:" we "desire," saith the apostle, "that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope to the end." Such as look not after assurance conscientiously, render their spiritual state suspicious; for it is the nature of grace to put the possessor forwards to perfection. The sincere Christian will be "perfecting holiness in the fear of God," and press forward to enjoy more of God's presence. "Let us," saith the apostle, "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith."*

4. And O the advantage and benefit that God's chil-

* 2 Pet. i. 10. Heb. vi. 11. 2 Cor. vii. 1. Heb. x. 22.

dren have by a well-grounded assurance of their salvation; it will raise your hearts in praise of God, and transport your spirits to love and delight in him. This drops sweetness into all worldly enjoyments; it cheers up the heart in sufferings, Heb. x. 34; fortifies the soul against temptations; excites the Christian to all acts of new obedience; gives contentment in every condition; strengthens against fears of death, and is a certain prelude and forerunner of heaven. O happy soul that can say, God is my father, saints my elder brothers, and I shall meet them all in glory, and sing praises with them to God and the Lamb for evermore.

But how shall a person know that he shall be one of those that shall be gathered together to Christ, in that solemn day?

In reply, I desire that you will faithfully answer these seven questions:

1. Have you been gathered to Christ by converting grace? "To him," that is, to Shiloh, "shall the gathering of the people be," Gen. xlix. 10. Hath the Spirit of God in the word convinced you of your distance from God, prevailed with you to enter into solemn covenant with him? Alas, by nature we are as sheep going astray,* prodigals in a far country, have neither skill nor will to return to God, but Christ the good shepherd calleth "his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out, they know his voice and follow him," John x. 3, 4. Formerly, saith the returning sinner, I heard but the voice of man, now methinks I hear the voice of God rending my heart, discovering those concealed lusts which no mortal can know of, the very secrets of my heart are made manifest; then you must "fall down on your face and worship God, and must report

* Psalm cxix. 176.

that God is there" in such an ordinance, "of a truth," 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. What concussions and shakings of soul have you found to unsettle you from your carnal peace and security? Hath the Lord "hewed you by his prophets, and slain you with the words of his mouth?" What convictions of your lost condition? What tremblings, when the Lord roareth as a lion? Are you of those that tremble at the word of the Lord,* yet it doth not drive you from him, but to him? I can be safe no where but under the shadow of his wings. Come "let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten," Jer. l. 5. I will bind this slippery heart to the Lord, with the strongest and straitest ties: I will not only say it with my mouth, but "subscribe it with my hand; yea, and swear myself to be the Lord's, and his only." Some indeed swear by the name of the Lord, but "not in truth, nor in righteousness;"† but the sincere Christian is most afraid of hypocrisy, longs after sincerity, approves his heart to God, resolves to resort to his standard, fight his battles, and be on his side for ever. Let flesh and blood, and all the devils in hell say what they can to the contrary, is this your peremptory resolution?

2. Have you separated from sinners, 2 Cor. vi. 17, "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you:" for, "what communion hath light with darkness?" As men cannot carry their vain companions to heaven, so not into the church state. No unclean thing or person can enter the gates of this holy city; for without are dogs.‡ Saints may not deny

* Hos. vi. 5. xi. 10, 11. Isa. lxvi. 5.
† Isa. xliv. 5. xlv. 23. xlviii. 1. lxv. 16.
‡ 2 Cor. vi. 14. Rev. xxi. 27. xxii. 15.

civil converse with the worst of men in a neighbourhood or near relations, 1 Cor. v. 10. But in two respects, the apostle denies society with gross sinners: First, there should not be too much or needless familiarity with them, so as to be mingled with them; as water and oil will not mix, Christians must not, will not be intimate as cronies with dissolute persons: and, secondly, in a special manner with such as are pretended Christians, and belie their profession by scandalous actions: these of all others we must keep at a distance from, as a part of their punishment to bring them to shame, and so to repentance.* If you act as Christians, you will let a person of this description see a strangeness in you towards him, that he may turn into himself by self-reflection, recognize his disorder, or seek where to hide himself. But that is not all, for a godly person hath a kind of aversion to wilful sinners, and avoids them as afraid of being infected by them, as Joseph kept himself from his mistress; and as Solomon adviseth, Prov. v. 8, 9. By familiar converse you may encourage them in sin, and prejudice yourselves: hence all pious persons have been afraid to associate with sinners, so David, Psal. xxvi. 4, "I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers;" for, in their company I shall get either guilt or grief; if I act as they, I shall be guilty, if not, I shall be grieved; the best is, to meddle as little as I can with them, for God's honour, and my own peace. I will resolve with old Jacob, Gen. xlix. 6, "O my soul come not into their secret;" I dare not touch the rope, lest I hear the bell; I will "abstain from the appearance of evil;" and hate the garment spotted by the flesh."†

3. Have you associated yourselves with them that

* 2 Thess. iii. 14. † 1 Thess. v. 22. Jude, 23.

fear God? Pious persons were holy David's intimate friends," Psal. xvi. 3; the saints were in his account the "excellent of the earth, in whom was all his delight; a companion," saith he, "am I to all them that fear thee;"* I have wise senators, and valiant soldiers, but what are these to me, if they be not truly religious? one Jonathan is better than many Joabs, one Hushai better than a thousand Ahithophels; I love them that fear God with a peculiar affection, yea, though they should be severe upon me if I offend, I will not only patiently bear it, but thankfully own them as my benefactors. "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness—Faithful are the wounds of a friend."† I will love Nathan the better whilst I live, for his faithfulness: let my soul be united to saints. I will live with them on earth with whom I would sing praises in heaven. Communion of saints is not only an article in my creed, but a main point of practice, and next to communion with God, my highest privilege. These, these will I converse familiarly with; I will confer with them about the things of God, pray and praise God with them, sit down with them at the holy supper, and walk hand in hand with them in my journey heaven-wards. There is a holy union of all saints, which yet is not natural or corporal, political or even personal, but yet it is real; and this union is either mystical, as members of the same mystical body, Eph. v. 30, or ecclesiastical. Converts are said to be added to the church, and to have mutual external fellowship, Acts ii. 41, 42. Thus Paul when converted, "assayed to join himself to the disciples," Acts ix. 26; and others consorted with Paul and Silas,‡ and indeed it is natural for a child of God to desire, yea and

* Psal. cxix. 63. † Psal. cxli. 5. Prov. xxvii. 6.
‡ Acts xvii. 4.

delight in the society of the saints; hence the apostle mentions the Philippians' "fellowship in the gospel, from the first day until now,"* mark it, it was early and permanent. Good men know not how to go to heaven alone; they must go forth by the footsteps of the flock, and are like a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariot:† so amiable, profitable, and pleasant is Christian society.

4. Do you lay to heart the scatterings of Christians? Zeph. iii. 18, "I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden." This scattering is either by persecution or dissension. First, if enemies prevail and break up the saints' solemn meetings, God's poor children lay it deeply to heart; hence such lamentable complaints and expostulations from them, Psal. lxxiv. 3, "Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations, even all that the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary," Isa. lxiv. 9—12. This was one ingredient of Judah's lamentation, that the ways of Zion mourn, and God's people did mourn with her, Lam. i. 4—7. Such sympathy indicates the spirit of religion, and moves God's heart, and possibly in this world they may be gathered, at any rate in the other, Isa. lxvi. 10, "Rejoice ye with Jerusalem and be glad with her, all ye that love her, rejoice for joy with her all ye that mourn for her;" Sion's friends shall partake of Sion's comforts. Secondly, Such as grieve for the divisions of the church within herself, Judg. v. 15, 16, "For the divisions of Reuben, there were great thoughts of heart, great searchings of heart." Oh, the sad contentions and animosities that have risen up in the church in all ages, with which the pious and peaceable members thereof have been grievously afflicted! sometimes per-

* Phil. i. 5. † Song. i. 8, 9.

sonal, sometimes doctrinal differences have rent the bowels thereof, and rent the hearts of public, uniting spirits, and they have almost despaired of seeing an end of them in this world, till they arrive in the place where Luther and Calvin are made perfect friends, and all the saints shall be of one mind. Mourners for these breaches shall be perfectly cured and comforted, Isa. li. 11, "Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return and come with singing unto Zion, and everlasting joy shall be upon their head, they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away."

5. Do you follow the army of martyrs in bearing your cross, and preparedness to suffer for Christ? This way have all the saints gone to heaven, this is the established, enacted law of Christ.* "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me," Matt xvi. 24. "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."† Heaven is taken by storm, and the gracious soul is resolved to go through storms; for persecution is the common, constant lot of all the saints; "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."‡ But the Christian is not appalled with, nor ashamed of, the cross of Christ; nay, "he takes pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake," 2 Cor. xii. 10; he even glories in the cross, and in the marks of the Lord Jesus,‖ as much as an old soldier in his wounds received in the wars; as the poor woman in the book of martyrs thought it a piece of honour and happiness, that her foot was put in the same hole of the stocks wherein Mr. Philpot's had been before. So Christians

* Hâc itur ad astra. † Acts xiv. 22. ‡ 2 Tim. iii. 12.
‖ Gal. vi. 14, 17.

rejoice to follow that blessed army of martyrs to heaven, not merely by an apish imitation from a good conceit they have of them, but "having the same spirit of faith,"* they endure opposition; whatever it may cost the believer, onwards he will proceed, though he die in the conflict; he sees a crown awaiting him, and so gathers strength by every effort; yea, by every foil, as it was said of Rome,† that every battle, even every slaughter of men made her more courageous. So it is with the conflicting soul, none of these things that startle others, move him, but animate him with more courage in his christian warfare, and voyage through this boisterous sea to the haven of rest.‡ Is it thus with you?

6. Do you daily make proficiency in grace? Are you marching on in your christian course, adding daily some cubits to your spiritual stature? There is no standing still in heaven's road, not to go forward, is to go backward. Paul saith, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Nothing would satisfy him on this side perfection: he longs after that degree of grace at which he shall attain in the resurrection. The sincere Christian grows brighter and better, as the shining light, "that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Where there is truth, there will be growth. Grace is like a grain of mustard-seed; the Christian never thinks he hath grown enough, he is still "perfecting holiness in the fear of God," getting ground daily on the body of death. This is their duty, this is their property, this is what the apostle earnestly prays for, 1 Thess. iii. 12, 13, "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men," &c. I would, saith the saint, be holier than the

* 2 Cor. iv. 13. † Roma cladibus animosior. ‡ Acts xx. 24.

holiest saint on earth, but judge myself less than the least of all saints.* O that I were perfectly free from sin! O that my blossoms of grace were ripe fruit! O that I could increase with the increase of God! Let my faith grow exceedingly to full assurance;† let my love rise to delight in God, my repentance be more evangelical, my hope more fixed, my fear more filial, my obedience more unreserved, and all my graces more lively, and my whole man more conformable to Christ, the perfect pattern of holiness. O that I could "go from strength to strength, till in Zion I appear before God," Psal. lxxxiv. 7.

7. What blessed instinct inclines you heaven-wards? Heavy things move downwards, light things upwards; every thing moves towards its centre. The church is compared "to pillars of smoke," still mounting towards its proper element. So the Chrtstian is ἄνωθεν γεγενομένος, "born from above," and naturally inclines to things above.‡ Grace resembles God, it expands the soul's faculties, and makes it altogether unsatisfied with sublunary things. Even a heathen Seneca could say, "I am born to higher things than to these trifles;‖ my thoughts are carried quite above visible objects, mortal things cannot fill an immortal soul, especially touched with a coal from the altar, which raiseth sparks upwards to the fountain of light and love. Our Lord gives this as a certain, το τεκμήριον, or token of a soul that is either prepared for this or for another world; Matt. vi. 21, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." The workings of the heart are an infallible demonstration of a Christian's state. Is the rational, habitual motion, and tendency of your

* Phil. iii. 11, 14. Prov. iv. 18. 2 Cor. vii. 1. Eph. iii. 8.
† Col. ii. 19. 2 Thess. i. 3. ‡ Cant. iii. 6. John iii. 3.
‖ Major sum et ad majora natus.

hearts God-wards, heaven-wards? Have you a strong, impetuous movement and bent of soul towards things above? Are you best pleased when your hearts are in a frame for devotion? Do you take it ill, and resent with some regret and indignation that which obstructs your soul's progress? Have you a strong impulse heaven-wards, by the restless tendency of desire, and by the acquiescing affection of delight? Are you never so well as when you are conversant about heavenly objects? It is the blessed apostle's character of a saint, Col. iii. 1, "If you then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." There, there is a Christian's life, his love, and delight; thither he is mounting as on eagles' wings, and is never satisfied till he be swallowed up in the divine embraces.* He is glad of communion with saints below, more glad of communion with God in his ordinances, but still most restless till he be wrapt up in the full enjoyment of God above; for our Lord hath said, Luke xvii. 37, "Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together." The saints are united to Christ by faith, as members to the head, and have an innate tendency towards him, and cannot be satisfied without a full enjoyment of him, and that will never be, till the soul get above this drossy, reeling earth into the regions above. Is this your frame? are these your aims? are your movements heavenwards, though, alas, too often interrupted, to the grief of your hearts? Your souls are now espoused to Christ your husband, and you earnestly long for the completion of the nuptials, "that you may be presented to your heavenly husband as chaste virgins."†

* Isaiah xl. 31. † 2 Cor. xi. 2.

CHAP. X.

COUNSEL GIVEN TO ALL TO SEEK AFTER THIS BLESSED GATHERING AT LAST.

EXHORTATION may be addressed to *sinners* and to *saints.*

1. To sinners. A word or two to those who are yet in "the gall of bitterness, and bonds of iniquity," secured with chains for the prince of darkness, "led captive by him at his pleasure."* Suffer yourselves to be gathered unto Christ; what would poor ministers give that they might prevail with you? How doth our Lord spread his arms to embrace you? After all your wanderings and extravagances, the Father of the prodigal would run towards the returning prodigal, fall on your neck, kiss you, and make you kindly welcome; and pious Christians would not envy your reception, but delight in your society, as not diminishing but increasing their felicity. "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth," saith our Lord; again, there is "joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."† Glad are the saints of such consorts; glad are the holy angels of such babes to attend upon; glad would poor ministers be, if your souls were savingly converted and gathered to Christ: but if you still stand out, you have neither part nor lot in this matter, but must be exiles, banished and "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power," 2 Thess. i. 7—9. As meanly as you think of God's children now, parting from them will be doleful in the great day. Now be wise for your precious souls.

* Acts viii. 23. 2 Tim. ii. 26. † Luke xv. 7, 10.

(1.) There is yet a possibility that you may be converted and saved: "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation;"* to-morrow, it may be past, and never return again. You are yet alive, many are past hope, past help, thousands are dead and lost since you deserved to be in hell; you are yet monuments of mercy.

(2.) The spirit is yet striving with you, poor ministers are studying for you, pouring out their souls to God for you, longing after you, crying out, Why will you die? Why will you refuse this blessed call of God? Be it known to you, God will not always be insulted, "His spirit shall not always strive."†

(3.) If ever your souls be converted and saved, while God is the efficient cause, you yourselves must be instruments; for God works morally, so as to preserve men's nature and the principles thereof; if ever you repent, the work is yours, though the power to work is from God, Phil. ii. 12, 13. Saith a great divine, "The duty is ours, the grace is his; God is the efficient, man the agent."‡

(4.) Your duty is then to fall down on your knees, and beg of God a disposition suited to the grace of God, and fitted for this day of gathering; Lord, I am now going to hear thy word, O come with power from on high, open my heart as thou didst the heart of Lydia: melt my heart like wax, then set thy stamp upon me: "Cast down my vain imaginations—and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."‖ Square my soul to be a temple of the Holy Ghost. Put spiritual life into my soul, and let

* 2 Cor. vi. 2. † Gen. vi. 3.

‡ Omne opus humanum est virium nostrarum opus, et vires nullæ sunt nobis nisi à Deo liberè donatæ.—*Baxter's Myth. Theol. Part 3, page 46.* ‖ Acts xvi. 14. 2 Cor. x. 5.

me be one of those lively stones which are built up a spiritual house. Put thy hand in "by the hole of the door of my heart, and make my bowels move towards thee."* Let the power of thy grace be such a hidden, prevailing, uncontrolable efficacy as may win my soul to thee: all I can do is nothing, unless the Spirit prevail. If thou wilt work who can let it? if thou work not, all I do is in vain. O Lord, let me not perish with the infidel world, "Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men, but in the midst of thy congregation let me bless the Lord."†

2. But the parties I have to deal with, more directly are Christians, real saints, who are gathered to Christ, and hope to be gathered to him at last with the rest of God's people; to such as these I will give these few instructions, and to all professors.

(1.) Be sincere; be really what you seem to be by profession. It will be a dreadful disappointment to pass for saints, and be found among them, and not be of them; for it is said, Rom. ix. 6, "They are not all Israel, which are of Israel," that is, those that are of the stock of Israel are not all of the same spirit; some goats may be found among the sheep till the separating day; some may "have a name to live and be dead."‡ All is not gold that glitters, shining lamps, and oil in the vessels, are different things. It will be a dreadful thing when the master of the feast comes to view his guests, and finds one not having on a wedding garment, and thus expostulates with him, "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" Alas, he was speechless and cast into outer darkness. O what "weeping and gnashing of teeth!" Matt. xxii. 11—13. O beware of a mere show and semblance of religion. Tremble, lest when you are weighed in the

* 1 Pet. ii. 5. Song v. 4. † Psal. xxvi. 9, 12. ‡ Rev. iii. 1.

balances you be found wanting, lest your works be not perfect before God,* πεπληρωμένα, filled up with the necessary essentials that constitute a Christian. Sirs, a day is coming when your inside will be turned out, to the open view of all; when God will bring to "light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the heart," 1 Cor. iv. 5. See then that your hearts be sound in God's statutes that you may not be ashamed. Be sincere, and then you "will be without offence in the day of Christ;"† be upright in heart and uniform in life; keep a conscience void of offence: walk with God, and you shall rest with God.

(2.) Gather yourselves together in solemn exercises of religion; especially in cases of public calamity and common danger, so God calls to Israel, Zeph ii. 1, 2, "Gather yourselves together, yea, gather yourselves together, O nation not desired, before the decree bring forth." Be unanimous and harmonious in fasting and praying. How often doth God call his people of old, "to sanctify a fast, to call a solemn assembly, to gather the elders;"‡ there is great reason for it, all have sinned, all must be humbled, all are concerned. Persons may be helpful one to another, "a threefold cord is not easily broken."‖ God sometimes expects unanimous votes, which make a great sound in his ears. Let Christians do as the children of Israel and Judah, go together "to God weeping and seeking the Lord their God, covenanting with God," as in Jer. l. 4, 5. Yea, in ordinary duties of prayer, conference, and reading, let them strengthen one another's hands in God; "Provoke each other to love and to good works.§ Sing God's praises together. O what an emblem of heaven is this communion of saints! Many combustibles kindled

* Rev. iii. 2. † Psal. cxix. 80. Phil. i. 10.
‡ Joel i. 14. ii. 16. ‖ Eccl. iv. 9—12. § Heb. x. 24.

make a great blaze; grapes put together ripen one another. Is communion of saints good in heaven, and is it not good here? Are not some Christians ignorant, and want informing? Are not some dead, and want quickening; hard, and want softening; wandering, and want reclaiming? Are not some staggering, and want settling? Are not some weak, and should not we lift "up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees?* Get together here as you hope to come together hereafter.

(3.) Agree affectionately. Let not Christians fall out by the way, when they hope to meet in the end. Away with discords and divisions, if any occasions of difference fall out, (as it is likely there will) rest not till you seek and obtain reconciliation. If thou hast any thing against thy brother, be thou faithful in admonishing, if it be his fault, to bring him to repentance, keep not malice burning in thy heart; avenge not yourselves, express brotherly kindness to him. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good," study Rom. xii. 18—21. "If thou remember that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift," Matt. v. 23, 24. God will rather tarry for his due than thou shouldst neglect thy duty; if thou be conscious to thyself that he hath just reason to be offended with thee, humble thyself, confess thy fault to God and him; if thou be not conscious that thou hast done him wrong, go to him and know the reason of his strangeness to thee, and endeavour to pacify him; do not fall out with any brother, but "live in peace, that the God of love and peace may be with you."† O beware of quarrels and animosities; study the wisdom which is

* Heb. xii. 12. † 2 Cor. xiii. 11.

"from above, that is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated:"* you must agree in the end, now affectionately agree; for reproof to the world, for the credit of religion, for your own comfort live peaceably; cut not asunder the veins and sinews of the mystical body of Christ; study 1 Cor. i. 10, Phil. ii. 1, 2.

(4.) Travail over sinners for their conversion. Do your utmost, endeavour to bring in souls to God, that there may be more at that great day to be gathered together to Christ. This is your present duty, this will be your future joy; this is ministers' proper work, and every Christian's concern. I have heard of a private Christian that used to follow persons to their shops, ploughs, and discourse with them about soul-affairs, and thereby was an instrument to convert forty souls to Christ. O what an honour would this be! doubtless, private Christians if wise, serious, and zealous, might do much good this way, and yet keep their places, Jude, 22, 23, "Of some have compassion, making a difference, others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire." Alas, sirs, how can you find in your hearts to see relations or any miserable sinners dropping into the fire of hell, and not speak one word to stop them? O dreadful cruelty! are you not some way accessary to that man's death who is going to cut his own throat, when you neglect to lay hands on him? Consider this, and be not merciless to souls; advise, admonish, rebuke, entreat them for Christ's sake, for their own sakes to pity themselves, and not leap into the pit of destruction; who knows what good you may do? if you be but instrumental in converting one poor sinner "from the error of his way, you save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins," James v. 20.

* James iii. 17.

And O what joy on both sides will there be at your next meeting before the throne!

(5.) Moderately lament and profitably improve the death of christian friends. They are gathered to Christ and the rest of their brethren; they are safely removed out of danger, they would be loth to be back again in this sinful, sorrowful world. You may lawfully mourn your loss, but envy not your friends' gain; "Sorrow not even as others who have no hope," 1 Thess. iv. 13; as if they were lost, or as if you should never meet again, for the dead in Christ and survivors shall be ever with the Lord, ver. 15, 17; it is but a short absence, there shall be a joyful meeting; a little recess shall be followed with everlasting converse. David would not mourn for his dead child, for, saith he, "I shall go to him but he shall not return to me;" but he lamented sore for Absalom, whom he was afraid he was never to see again with comfort.* Those that die in the Lord are not lost but reserved; their bodies sleep in Jesus, and their souls rest in the bosom of their dear Lord; they are with him in paradise, and say, "weep not for us but weep for yourselves;"† imitate our example, worship the same God that we do, live as citizens of heaven, let your affections be with ours, hold communion with us; this I have treated of, in my book on "Heavenly Converse."

(6.) Make ready to follow those crowned saints. They are gone above, we are below; they pray for the filling up of their number, let us pray that we may be "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," Col. i. 12. The language of Jesus Christ and all the saints is, "be ye therefore ready also;"‡ be dressing yourselves for that marriage day; "Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb, and have put on their fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteous-

* 2 Sam. xii. 23. xviii. 33. † Luke xxiii. 28. ‡ Luke xii. 40.

ness of saints, Rev. xix, 7—9; δικαιώματα, righteousnesses both inherent and imputed. Both are necessary for their several ends and uses: whether this refer to the day of Antichrist's fall, or to the resurrection, it is true in both. There are great and good things "which God hath prepared for them that love him,"* freedom from sin and sorrows, perfection of peace and joy, immediate communion with God, fulness of grace and eternal happiness. Wherefore, "beloved, seeing that you look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace without spot and blameless," 2 Pet. iii. 14; watching, warring, wrestling, working, well doing, waiting till your change come, with your loins girt, your lamps lighted, burning and shining with splendour, and you "yourselves like unto men that wait for your Lord."†

(7.) Be longing for that blessed day, when your souls shall be gathered among them, with our blessed Lord. Paul saith, "he desired to depart and be with Christ, which is far better."‡ It is good to be with saints here, but it is far better, infinitely better to be with them in heaven, where the king makes the court, and the courtiers are all crowned kings. Is there not great reason the saints should cry out with Monica, Austin's mother, What do I here? or with Calvin, How long, Lord?‖ O when shall my poor imprisoned soul be set at liberty from this body of death? When shall I mount up above the stars, into those celestial regions? O the groanings of my soul under this body of death and distance from God; yea, "I groan earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with a house which is from heaven."§ When will my dear Lord break down these clay-walls, demolish this cage, and let this soul fly up into the heavens, where it shall be

* 1 Cor. ii. 9. † Luke xii. 35, 36. ‡ Phil. i. 23.
‖ Quid hic facio? Usque quo, Domine? § 2 Cor. v. 1—3.

perfected? How "long shall I dwell in Meshech, and sojourn in the tents of Kedar."* I am weary of sin, and distance from my dear Lord, most of my godly friends are gone, when shall I follow after? "Why is his chariot so long in coming, why tarry the wheels of his chariot? make haste my beloved, and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices."† Why doth my soul thus linger and lag behind my old companions? Such, and such are gone with whom I took sweet counsel in familiar conference about the things of God, and our heavenly country; many with whom I have prayed, and praised God, with whom I have sat down at the Lord's table, now they are drinking wine new in my Father's kingdom, and why am I left thus far behind, worshipping afar off? Lord, come thou down to me, or take me up to thee, reach out thy hand, pluck me out of this low dungeon, and set me, where thou hast promised such as have followed thee in the regeneration, upon thrones, yea thou hast promised "that such as overcome shall sit with thee in thy throne."‡ The preferment is too high for such a worthless worm, such a polluted sinner as I am, but thy promise is sure to be performed; I depend upon it, I long for such a day; some, yea thousands have taken possession; I am one of thy redeemed ones, thou hast given me the earnest of thy Spirit, and some foretastes and prelibations of glory. O for a full harvest! I reach out my arms towards thee, and hope at last to enjoy thy immediate presence; "The Spirit and the bride say, come; and let him that heareth say, come; he which testifieth these things saith, surely, I come quickly; my soul echoes, Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus."‖

* Psal. cxx. 5. † Judg. v. 28. Cant. viii. 14.
‡ Matt. ix. 25. Rev. iii. 21. ‖ Rev. xxii. 17, 20.

CHAP. VII.

ENCOURAGEMENT TO GOD'S CHILDREN IN VARIOUS CASES, DERIVED FROM THIS SUBJECT.

THE last use is intended to convey consolation, or encouragement to the people of God, because there shall be such a blessed gathering together.

1. Because the saints of God, that have lived in all ages, shall then meet and know and enjoy each other with mutual content. It is worth observing, that Plato brings in Socrates comforting himself with the hopes that upon his removal hence, he should be with Orpheus and Musæus, with Hesiod and Homer; that he should even be greatly pleased with the society of Palamedes and Ajax: but O how much more satisfaction shall translated saints find in the society of those celestial inhabitants, of whom they have so often read, and heard with delight; when they shall say, there stands holy Enoch, that walked with God, and was translated body and soul to heaven; there stands Noah, that just and perfect man, the father and founder of a new world; there stands Abraham, the father of the faithful, and friend of God; there stands just Lot; wrestling Jacob; the beloved Joseph, more glorious now than in Pharaoh's court; there stands meek Moses, the Jews' lawgiver, once king in Jeshurun, that conversed with God face to face; there stands Aaron, the saint of God, far more glorious now than in his priestly garments in the holy of holies; there appears pious Samuel, patient Job, zealous Josiah, David, the man after God's own heart. Behold a troop comes up of old and new testament saints, all the prophets, apostles, ministers, martyrs, confessors, and saints in all ages;

who will make a splendid show, next to the infinite God, and our glorious Redeemer. If Augustine judged it a fine sight, and worth wishing for, to see Rome flourishing, to hear Paul preaching, and to behold Christ in the flesh;* much more will it be a transporting sight to behold our glorified Redeemer surrounded with myriads of blessed souls. This will be a delectable vision indeed.

2. Saints that have enjoyed sweet communion together in this world, shall enjoy sweeter and perpetual communion above; they that have kept days of fasting and prayer, days of thanksgiving and conference, that have sat under the same preaching, have sung psalms together, have sat down together at the holy supper, and feasted upon the fruits of Christ's meritorious sacrifice, shall now drink this wine new with him, in his Father's kingdom. O what communication of experience, of what they met in their passage through this wilderness into their celestial Canaan. How will they echo to each other and say, "We sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste."† It was sweet then, it is sweeter now: O the peculiar goodness of distinguishing grace! Why did God choose us rather than others to be objects of his transcendent love! We were fed with manna in the wilderness, now we are come into the land of promise, we have royal dainties, and drink abundantly of these rivers of pleasures, and bathe our souls in this boundless sea of satisfying delights; then they will individually sing with a louder note than ever, "Come, and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul."‡ I

* Romam in flore, Paulum in ore, Christum in corpore.

† Song ii. 3. ‡ Psal. lxvi 16.

was with my dear Lord in such a secret place, now I declare his goodness in the heights of Zion.

3. Saints that parted sorrowfully with their relations by death, now meet them again to part no more. Death brought a cloud over our natural and christian friends. They disappeared, and we saw them no more; but now we are met again in a better place than in our houses, or temples made with hands. We once took mutual delight in each other, but that was only a shadow, a faint resemblance of what we now enjoy; the husband and wife "were heirs together of the grace of life,"* now they are possessors together of the fulness of that grace in glory. We prayed, wept, discoursed together; we loved each other in the flesh, but now our spark is become a flame; we love at another rate. The godly child will say, this is my tender-hearted mother, my prudent, pious father, that shed many a tear for me. The parent will say, this, my child cost me many times a sad heart, many a bitter groan, he is the son of my vows; then the child of my hopes, now the child of my joys; his miscarriages cost me dear, his happiness raises my spirits; he caused me to make many an errand to the throne of grace, he now elevates my spirit into an ecstacy of joy. My prayers are fully heard, my happiness is completed in the enjoyment of God with my dear relations.

4. Souls fully refined from the dregs of passion and corruption, will then without such alloys enjoy each other. Alas, we cannot discourse together here, but some piece of vanity interposeth itself: our discourses are oft impertinent, sometimes unsavory, sometimes giving and often taking offence. Alas, what discords, distances, and dissensions are there among Christians; even Paul and Barnabas may part in ill humour. Alas,

* 1 Pet. iii. 7.

what animosities and heart burnings are to be found here in this lower world even among the saints! That we may heavily sigh and say, how comes it to pass that such angry, diabolical passions should rise in heavenly hearts?* But now those flames are quenched, now they all unite in harmonious melody, singing the song of Moses, and of the Lamb; now they are perfect, "of good comfort, of one mind, they live in peace, and the God of love and peace is with them,"† and they are with God; they shall never quarrel more. O the delectable melody of this palm-bearing company! far beyond the music of the spheres; not one jarring string in all that blessed concert; they have left behind them all their cudgels at the entrance of this temple of peace; their hearts are centred in God; Luther and Calvin are here perfectly agreed, never to contend more.

5. Saints shall be perfectly freed from converse with vile persons in this polluted world. Here the righteous and wicked are mixed; it is impossible to avoid some civil converse with carnal neighbours, for "then must we needs go out of the world;"‡ even notorious blasphemers, idolaters, covetous, who fret and vex the hearts of believers. But in heaven there are none such, no unclean thing enters there; the pious soul shall never be vexed with unruly company more. There is a day when the saints and none but saints shall be gathered together. There shall "be no more the Canaanite," or hypocrite, "in the house of the Lord of hosts."‖ Not a profane Esau, or a scoffing Ishmael in that household of God, among all those innumerable saints. These have left the mad world on earth sinning, or in hell suffering for ever.

* Tantæne animis cœlestibus iræ.

† 2 Cor. xiii. 11.

‡ 1 Cor. v. 10.

‖ Zech. xiv. 21.

6. Godly ministers and their gracious converts shall meet together with joy. O what reciprocal joy, and transcendent satisfaction will they experience in each other, " when both he that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together."* O, saith the glorified saint, yonder is my spiritual father, under whose ministry I have many a time sat with trembling, alarmed by convictions piercing my conscience, when the law hath thundered wrath against me. The same hand hath closed the wound and applied the plaister of a gospel-promise to my bleeding soul. Many melting, heart-searching truths have these ears heard from his mouth that have come warm to my heart. Blessed be God that ever I saw his face or heard his voice: the minister will be surprised with a transport of joy when he shall see his spiritual children, begotten in the bonds of the gospel, over whom he hath wept many a tear, travailed with cares and fears, and for whom he hath put up many affectionate prayers. Now he shall see, and say his labour was not in vain in the Lord; of these he will say, " what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming; for ye are our glory and joy, 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.

7. Christians that have been scattered by persecution, shall now quietly meet and part no more. How will they with comfort reflect on the solemn assemblies sorrowfully broken up by officers and unruly bailiffs, their names taken, their persons dragged before magistrates, their houses rifled, and themselves hurried to prison; now those days are over and gone, no danger of conventicles or unlawful assemblies in that upper region, they shall worship God on a hill, in the mountain of the height of Israel: they shall no more be prosecuted by murdering or scattering acts, these shall

* John iv. 36.

now be out of date, they shall no more hear the voice of the oppressor; there were many such days as those in the apostles' times, great persecutions against the church, so "that they were all scattered abroad"* through foreign regions. But now the storms are blown over, the clouds scattered, and the glorified saints shall never be disturbed by the sons of violence any more. They shall recount those past troubles with songs of praise.

8. The saints of God that have been confined to prisons, shall be set at liberty and enjoy sweet content together. The Lord made their very prisons sweet by mutual communion, but heaven will be sweeter. The imprisoned bird never sings so sweetly in the cage as at liberty. O blessed enlargement! Now they are delivered, with the rest of the creation, "into the glorious liberty of the children of God." They walk abroad at liberty at another rate than ever before. How will they with joy and triumph recount their wandering about in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth?† Sometimes thrust into dark and filthy dungeons, with felons and malefactors, yea, condemned, tortured, and executed, but now they have obtained a better resurrection. O happy deliverance! These shall have their proper mansions in their Father's house, and the celestial palace will resound sweet echoes of their triumphant praises, they shall not now, with Paul and Silas, sing in the stocks, but above where they shall be advanced together.‡

9. The saints that have providentially parted one from another upon any occasion, shall meet again and part no more. When Paul was to be bound at Jerusalem, and the disciples understood it, they were distressed and lamented; but Paul said, "what mean ye

* Acts viii. 1. † Rom. viii. 21. Heb. xi. 38. ‡ Acts xvi. 24, 25.

to weep and to break my heart?" Their weeping breaks his heart; but especially, saith the text, they sorrowed most of all, for the words that he spake, "that they should see his face no more."* And this is the case of many christian friends, but the relief is, they shall see each other's faces again in the mansions above; their faces will then shine as the sun, and their enjoyment will exceed the bounds of any capacity in this lower world. They parted but for a season, that they should "receive each other for ever,"† when the gracious God hath received them into everlasting habitations.

10. The saints that divided and could not agree to walk together in one church upon earth, shall be perfectly reconciled above, and then shall mutually embrace each other; they shall all speak the same thing, and never have the least reflecting speech or thought against one another. Possibly in this world the contention or paroxym between a "Paul and Barnabas may be so sharp, that they may depart asunder one from another."‡ As all God's people are necessarily scattered into distinct societies; though uniting in spirit in the bonds of peace, yet good persons of various persuasions, some being for greater latitude, others for stricter bonds, or being of different principles in smaller matters, or through prejudice, may in some cases refuse to hold communion occasionally one with another; but in heaven they shall be all of one mind and one heart, and all dissensions and divisions will be laid aside; O what perfect love, sweet harmony, and joyful delight will there be in the persons and graces of each other! there will be no saying then, I am of this opinion, or of this party, or a member of this church and not of another; but they shall attain the unity of

* Acts xxi. 11, 13. xx. 38. † Philemon, 15. ‡ Acts xv. 39.

the faith, and be cordially associated, members of the church triumphant.

11. Christians that had their natural infirmities, shall leave them behind them, and their united spirits shall be made perfect. What rough-hewn natures have some pious souls? How unsociable are some which proves a great affliction to themselves and all about them, still quarrelsome and discontented, nothing pleaseth them, and sometimes they cannot help it, though they strive and fight and pray against it, it still recurs and returns, and creates much vexation; but upon this blessed gathering together, "the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain, when the glory of the Lord shall be revealed."* O happy day, when there will be no envy or discontent, but the saints shall rejoice in each others' graces and comfort as their own, and be accordant with each other's spirits. Though some stars shall outshine others in lustre and glory, yet every vessel shall be full both of grace and comfort, and not an angry look or peevish word shall be found there to all eternity.

12. The saints that here consoled themselves and one another in their personal afflictions, shall leave their sorrows behind them, and all the occasions and grounds thereof, and unanimously thank God for complete immunity from all; some are sick, some are pained, some are pinched with poverty, others are tormented with wicked children and bad relations; some have troubles of conscience under darkness, and hidings of God's face, some assaulted with hellish suggestions, and satanical temptations, some are deeply melancholy, and making sad complaints. Now we are required "to bear one another's burdens;" and Paul saith, "Who is weak and I am not weak? who is offended and I

* Isaiah xl. 4, 5.

burn not ?"* Grace in the heart commands sympathy with others; but that perfect state dischargeth all compassion. They that mourned together shall rejoice together, not a sigh or groan shall ever proceed from a glorified spirit.

13. The saints shall have no more to do with difficult and self-denying duties. There are many personal duties that occasion some cost, and it becomes a Christian before hand "to sit down and count the cost,"† to mortify some particular lusts, to maintain a strict watch over heart and life, to worship God in the spirit, exercise every grace, maintain constant communion with God; these will cause a soul much attention and industry, and though these are sweet when practised, "for wisdom's ways are pleasantness,"‡ yet because of the corruption of our hearts, and averseness to any thing that is good, they become difficult; then the duties of relations are difficult, of parents to children, of masters to servants, and of Christians one to another, mutual inspection, admonition, giving and taking reproofs faithfully and humbly. Christians find these duties hard and grievous to flesh and blood. But the more spiritual any man grows, the more easy they grow; the more love is in our hearts to God, the less are his commandments grievous.‖ Now in heaven love will be perfected; and holy souls will be in their element while they are serving God and doing the work of that place; but the more "you can sing in the ways of the Lord," the more loudly will you sing in the height of Zion.§

14. The saints that have attended ordinances with many defects and imperfections will leave them all behind them, and attend the Lord without the least de-

* Gal. vi. 2. 2 Cor. xi. 29. † Luke xiv. 28. ‡ Prov. iii. 17.
‖ 1 John v. 3. § Psal. cxxxviii. 5. Jer. xxxi. 12.

fect, distraction or imperfection. The best of God's children have a weight hanging on them, and a "sin that too easily besets them,"* and impedes their motion and obstructs their ascent upwards; but these shackles shall be removed with the body, never a wandering thought more to all eternity. Here we not unfrequently weaken, rather than strengthen the hands one of another;† bodily infirmities often render the best services wearisome, because the holiest believers have but a measure of affection; hence it was that three of Christ's choicest disciples slept while he was in his agony, for though the "spirit was willing, yet the flesh was weak."‡ Alas, Aaron and Hur must hold up Moses's hands here, the best at some seasons may be out of frame for duty; but in heaven the saints shall join hearts and hands without weariness or distraction in singing the high praises of God in that heavenly choir, and none shall fail his brother, or fall short of duty.

15. Saints of the meanest stature and standing here, shall be complete, and commence the highest degree of grace in glory. I say not, that all the saints shall have equal degrees of glory; the scripture saith, at the resurrection, "one star differeth from another star in glory."‖ It is true, all these heavenly luminaries shall be perfectly arranged in one constellation. But good divines think, that as there will be degrees of torment in hell, so also of joys in heaven: as the vessels are larger to contain more, or as men have honoured God more here below, yet the humblest saints will be completely happy; "For they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many unto righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever," Dan. xii. 3. Weak Christians shall no more complain of defects,

* Heb. xii. 1. † Heb. xii. 12. ‡ Matt. xxvi. 36, 40, 41.
‖ 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42.

but "he that is feeble in that day shall be as David, and the house of David as God, as the angel of the Lord before them;" there will no more be thence an infant of days. The meanest Christian will in some respects be equal with the angels in heaven. Children in grace shall be grown up to be perfect men, "to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."*

16. Saints at that day shall be raised above the revilings, calumnies, and slanders of a malicious world, and be advanced to the highest honour. In this world every one can throw dirt on God's children, and account them the vilest of men, not worthy to live upon earth, and cry as the Jews against Paul, "away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live;" but what saith God of such; "Of whom the world was not worthy."† No nicknames shall follow them to heaven, they shall not be there called puritans, fanatics, schismatics, or fools, possibly they may even be honoured among men when dead and raised to glory; "The memory of the just is blessed."‡ The inhabitants of the world above shall honour them, though sometimes they thought and spoke slightly of them, even the wicked who are shut up in hell shall think honourably of them, as the rich man who considered once poor Lazarus a fit ambassador to send to his rich brethren on earth; it may also be that wretched hypocrites on earth will build "the tombs of deceased prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,"‖ in honour of those whom they, or such as they were, did once abuse and revile on earth; they will call the dead, saints and canonize them. Thus God often turns the scales and rolls away the reproach of his servants.

* Zech. xii. 8. Isa. lxv. 20. Matt. xxii. 30. Eph. iv. 13.
† Acts xxii. 22. Heb. xi. 38. ‡ Prov. x. 7, 14.
‖ Luke xvi. 27, 28. Matt. xxiii. 29.

17. Saints that have exercised charity and hospitality, and such as received their bounty, will embrace each other with mutual pleasure. Our Lord saith, "Whosoever gives but a cup of cold water to a little one in the name of a disciple," though he may be mistaken, "verily I say unto you he shall in no wise lose his reward," Matt. x. 42. O! will the poor beggar say, there is my kind benefactor; the debtor will there own his creditor, who "forgave him all when he had nothing to pay;"* well, saith the free hearted disburser, I do not repent it, since I am so richly rewarded, this recompence is above my expectations, and contrary to my deserts; strange that I should receive so much for laying out so little, this is above Isaac's reaping an hundred fold. How comfortable will that language of our Lord be, when he shall say as in Matt. xxv. 34—40, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you," &c. Behold my representatives, in relieving of whom you relieved me; I took as done to my person what you did to my members, and you shall be glorified together.

18. Saints that have wanted many things in this world, when they meet above shall want nothing. In this world the body is full of wants, we want necessaries to supply nature, we want food to nourish us, clothes to cover us, physic to cure us, houses to shelter us, sleep to refresh us, yet these only supply particular wants, and men ordinarily have dependance one upon another for supplies; but when God's children ascend above, though they shall have sweet communion with one another, yet their happiness will chiefly depend on the vision and fruition of God. "With him is the fountain of life, in his light they see light, in his presence is ful-

* Matt. xviii. 26, 27.

ness of joy."* The sun doth dart its beams through the whole universe; God's presence, not the saints', makes heaven; the king makes the court, not courtiers; nothing can satisfy the capacious soul but God. "I shall be satisfied," saith David, "when I awake with thy likeness:"† that and nothing else gives content. Angels and glorified spirits, as creatures, must say, it is not in us to satisfy you; God alone can: now, and never till now, the soul saith, I have enough, I need no more: I have not only tasted, but drunk deep of this river of pleasures, yea, bathed my soul in this blessed ocean of delights: nor do I become sated with these, but fresh springs of joy yield me perpetual contentment.

19. All saints pass through the valley of the shadow of death to the glory that shall be revealed: none exempted but Enoch and Elias, and those that shall be found alive at the last day. It is no strange thing, "for it is appointed to men once to die."‡ It is the common lot of mankind, even of the best. The sting of death is gone, it is but a trap-door to let us into heaven. Thousands are gone before us; they are not lost, but reserved; we shall meet them again. O who would be afraid of death, when Jesus Christ hath perfumed the grave for us? Well may a graceless soul be afraid to die, because he knows not what company he shall have in the other world; suspecting, however, that he may have to fare with devils and lost souls; but the "righteous hath hope in his death,"‖ and sees Jesus Christ standing with a crown on his head, and another in his hand, saying, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."§

* Psal. xxxvi. 9. xvi. 11. † Psal. xvii. 15. ‡ Heb. ix. 27.
‖ Prov. xiv. 32. § Rev. ii. 10.

Why should we then fear the king of terrors, who is disarmed, he may hiss, but cannot sting us; he may kill us, but cannot hurt us.* See, yonder glorified assembly of the spirits of just men made perfect have conquered death, and are set upon splendid thrones.

20. This blessed society of departed souls shall continue through the ages of eternity. In this world they met and parted again, there were many intermissions in their sweet communion: but now they shall for ever dwell in the house of the Lord, "and sing praises to the Lamb for ever; such as overcome shall be pillars in the temple of God, and shall go no more out."† They shall never be banished out of this heavenly paradise. This word ever, evermore, everlasting, puts new life into the glorious songs of praise, and daily revives their spirits. After ten thousands of millions of ages, the joy shall be as fresh as at their first entrance. That river is still running, "in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."‡ Mortality is written upon all sublunary things; eternity gives weight to what is spiritual; there "shall be no night there," no clouds, no eclipses of that glory, "for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever."‖ It is recorded of Diagoras, that when he saw his three sons crowned in one day, as victors, at the Olympic games, he died away while he was embracing them for joy. But though the saints shall be in a continual ecstacy and transport of joy, in beholding their children in Christ, and their godly christian friends, yet their hearts shall not break, but be enlarged with joy, and their joy perpetuated for evermore.

O what a day will that be, when all the sons of the second Adam shall meet together, and so many spirits

* 1 Cor. xv. 56, 57. † Rev. iii. 12. ‡ Psal. xvi. 11. ‖ Rev. xxii. 5.

purified from the sordid dregs of sin and suffering, shall combine their harmonious music and melody in praising our dear Lord, whose glorious perfections we could never sufficiently extol! What a brave choir will that make! not a discordant string among them all; but as one eye moves, the other corresponds; when one string is touched, the other sounds; such a blending harmony will there be of well-tuned praises in that heavenly chorus. Ignatius thinks the sun, moon, and stars made a choir about the star that appeared at Christ's incarnation: O then what a halcyon day will that be, "when the morning stars shall sing together, and the sons of God shall shout for joy!"* O what a harmonious melody in perfect symphony! What mutual love and delight in each other! Yea, they shall love one another the better, for the perfect love they have to God: and bathing their souls in that fathomless ocean of divine love.

It is true, the infinite God is ultimately and objectively the saints' proper delight both here and in heaven; but glorified bodies united to those blessed souls, and the blissful society of angels and saints, will be no small accessions to the saint's happiness. As there will be no hypocrite there to cool their charity, so there will not be missing the humblest member of Christ. The weak Christian that cried out, "my lameness, my lameness," shall then be strong. The dark soul that rarely had a glimpse of God, or a sealing of the Spirit, shall walk for ever in the light of God's countenance. The grieved saint shall be now in an ecstacy of joy: not a gracious soul shall be missing, not the least grace wanting, not a duty lost, all secret prayers, tears, groans, shall come to light and be rewarded, their tears were bottled, their prayers record-

* Job xxxviii. 7.

ed, and shall now be produced.* Not an act of charity, though the left hand knew not what the right hand did, much less others, but it shall be brought to light before angels and men, with high approbation and commendation.

O who would not be preparing for such a day? Who would not long for it, breathe after it, and freely welcome it? Let all the children of the "bride-chamber make themselves ready, let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning."† Be waking and watchful, attend his movements, be glad of his approaches, and joyfully welcome the bridegroom's coming with all his holy angels and glorified spirits, descending in the clouds to fetch you home into those celestial mansions to be for ever with the Lord. Be not afraid, when he saith, surely I come quickly; let the redeemed of the Lord echo, Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus, Amen, so be it.

* Psal. lvi. 8. † Luke xii. 35.

ORIGINAL SERMONS,

SELECTED FROM MANUSCRIPTS,

BY THE

REV. RICHARD SLATE.

ORIGINAL SERMONS.

SERMON I.

HOLINESS THE WAY OF SAFETY.

1 Peter iii. 13. *

And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

You are not wholly ignorant, my friends, of those distracting hurries and confusions, which at this day do fill the world: you have heard once and again, of these rumours of wars that are amongst us. Though we ourselves feel but little, compared with what others do, and meet with few pressing perplexities, in comparison of some that are daily groaning and mourning, being almost crushed with their heavy burdens; yet so much we know by undoubted reports, as, one would think, should be sufficient to alarm our fears and quicken us to our duty, were not our hearts as hard as they really are.

The great and all-wise governor of the world, is alarming the inhabitants who are in it by his stupendous and amazing providences; the dispensations we are under, are very awful and majestic. The spurious brood of Babylon, is contending by all possible methods to enlarge their antichristian territories, and deluge the world by a flood of popery; the beast that hath many heads and horns, hath them all at work. Behold a confederacy betwixt hell, Rome, and France; these, with their accomplices, are joined in a league to extirpate the precious sons of Zion,

* The substance of what was preached at Pontefract on two Lord's days, namely, Feb. 5th, and 19, 1692-3.

who are comparable to fine gold, and to extend the dominions of Beelzebub, the prince of darkness. Troops of infernal forces, headed and commanded by the hellish Abaddon, are ranging up and down the earth to dethrone, if it were possible, the King of heaven. However, no stone will be unturned, no means unattempted, to destroy his subjects that are upon the earth; for those that have got to glory, are removed safe out of the reach and gun-shot of the devil's imps. The enemies of the Lord and of his Christ, being filled with satanical rage, are unwearied in their endeavours to pull down God's sanctuary, to lay waste his heritage, to root out his people and interest, to turn his church, that pleasant Eden, into a howling and desolate wilderness.

These things, ringing in our ears, speak loudly to us to look about us. Surely it is the duty, and will be the care of all those that would not prove themselves fools at last, to seek out for shelter and security, when there is ground to fear that the furious storms of divine wrath are approaching. None, surely, will be so stupid and sottish as to charge us with folly, if we do industriously consult our own safety at such a time. We should be concerned to take the best course for our own preservation; and, what that is, the words of the text will inform you, namely, to follow that which is good. To be walking in the way of duty, which the Lord hath chalked out for us, is the most likely way to have protection, amidst outward confusions and threatening calamities. When there is a calm within, storms without will not be so likely to unhinge us. Outward enemies, with all their diabolical stratagems, will not be so frightful, when our lusts and corruptions, that are our inward and therefore our greatest enemies, have lost their power. Our holiness will be the best defence that we can make, as will be evident in the prosecution of the words we have read to you, to which now we shall gradually approach.

The penman of this epistle had to do with the Jews; the charge of those of the circumcision was committed to him, and he was accordingly concerned for them. He could not visit them all in person, because they were dispersed into so many and such remote regions; his tongue could not reach them, but his pen must; therefore he writes this epistle, that it might find them out in their several places of abode, chap. i. 1. The apostle's design here is, partly to confirm those saints in the belief of the gospel, and to testify that the doctrine of the grace of God through Christ, which they had embraced and did profess, was indeed infallibly true, being the same that had been preached by the prophets to the fathers of the old tes-

tament; and partly to exhort them to the practice of godliness, and a conversation suitable to the gospel.

1. This he doth more generally, as to sundry duties incumbent on all believers, which we need not now insist on, chap. ii. 13.

2. More particularly, as to some duties that concerned them in their special relations, callings, and conditions; as of subjects to magistrates, servants to masters, husbands and wives mutually to each other, of sufferers to their oppressors and persecutors, ministers towards their people, of the younger sort towards their elders, intermixing several duties of concernment to all. We shall only take notice of what lies before us in the former part of this third chapter.

The subject matter, about which the apostle treats in the beginning of this chapter, is the duties of husbands and wives to each other; for such is our weakness, if not wickedness, that we need direction in every condition. Wives, first, must see to discharge their duties. Two are here particularized.

I. Wives are to be in subjection to their own husbands, yea, though they were unbelievers, that so they might be won hereby; that when they saw such fruits and effects of the word in their wives, they might be induced to a liking of it. This is instructive to us. Hast thou a careless husband, that does not regard the great business of religion? Look to thy own duty; it may be, by thy regular and conscientious walking thou mayest gain him. Copy over the sermon in thy life, that he may read it there, if he will not hear it: words will not do, thou hast tried; let thy gospel-becoming conversation read him a lecture; let thy religious actions speak so much the louder; thou knowest not what works may do.

II. Here is a particular direction to teach them how they must be adorned. And that—

1. Negatively; ver. 3, "Whose adorning, let it not be," &c. He doth not absolutely condemn all kinds of ornaments, but that which is excessive, (say commentators,) and above persons' rank and condition in the world, and which they spend too much time about; he taxes that which springs from pride, vanity, &c. or tends to the provoking or cherishing of it; that which doth bespeak an unchaste heart, or may cause scandal to others, especially when this is accompanied with the neglect of inward beauty and spiritual ornaments.

If the gallants of our day would look more into this glass, and less into others, it is probable, the frame of their souls would be more conformable to the rule of the word; yea, and their bodies too; but it may be, many never look at it, or but

very seldom, for they seem to miss it very strangely. It is true, it is ordinary in this case, rather to observe what others do than what the word of God says; and if some persons' inward man had been more strictly looked after, and the outward man less, their souls had been more clean and pure; yea, if they had spent that time about them, which they might very well have spared as to the body. Well look to it, however, that there be not thread-bare souls under silken garments. Be careful lest external, gaudy dresses, be only marks to cover unclean, polluted hearts. It avails not to have the outside curiously adorned and decked, so as nothing can be espied amiss, if the inside be odious in the sight of God.

2. Positively: "But let it be the hidden man of the heart," ver. 4. Would you be curious and critical in adorning any thing? Let it be the inward man; spiritual ornaments are to be preferred. Let none say, these are low, mean things, and will not set them off; they are mistaken, this would be to contradict the apostle, for he tells us, that a meek and quiet spirit is an ornament; yea, and what is more, it "is, in the sight of God, of great price." Divine graces, will make you more truly amiable, than outward, adventitious finery.

But some, we do not say all, seek more to please themselves and a vain world than God; who had rather be the objects of others' admiration, than have divine approbation: hence it is, that they take more pains on a Lord's day morning about their bodies, and that needlessly, than they do upon their knees for their souls. But say some, what? would you have us out of fashion? No. This inward adorning was the old fashion, and the best, see ver. 5. And, it is probable, that antiquity here, is an argument for the excellency of it; it is a fashion which new modes will scarcely amend.

He comes then to acquaint husbands with something of their duty; "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge," &c. ver. 7, either, say some upon the place, according to the knowledge of the divine will which by the gospel they had obtained; or, prudently and wisely, as becometh those that understand their duty. They must give their wives honour, because the weaker vessels, and joint heirs of the grace of life. Before, wives were to be subject in another sense, but here, they stand upon a level with their husbands, there being neither male nor female in Christ, one being accepted by him as well as another; also, that their "prayers be not hindered."

Having dismissed that subject, he comes in ver. 8, to acquaint them, that, as brethren, they were to maintain and nourish mutual love and regard for one another: "Finally, be ye all

of one mind," &c. An excellent lesson for church members. "Be of one mind," as to essentials at least, in the great and fundamental articles of faith; and, as much as can be, in accidentals, and circumstantials too. Work goes on a great deal better, when persons are like minded, in the circumstantials of religion; yet it is not absolutely, and indispensably necessary, neither is it to be expected that it will be so, in minute punctilios; but there should be a mutual forbearance, for all that love as brethren. Though there be some different apprehensions and various sentiments, in those matters that are eccentric from fundamental truths, let not this alienate one anothers' affections; for then nothing will go on to purpose. We have seen what a flame hath been kindled in the world, by an overheated zeal for the appendages of religion; many have been so eager about fringes and phylacteries, that they have neglected the substance, which hath been no little support to Satan's kingdom, and no little hindrance to the building of God's house. O that the enemy of souls might be no longer successful this way amongst us! Let us endeavour to avoid every thing that might hinder an amicable accommodation amongst christian brethren.

In the next place, the apostle comes to shew them, how, as distressed and afflicted ones, they should demean themselves towards oppressors and persecutors; ver. 9, "Not rendering evil," &c.

And hereof he renders sundry reasons: namely, because hereto "they were called," and hereby they "should inherit a blessing;" which he confirms by a testimony of David, promising life and good days, to those that "eschew evil and do good," and threatening them that do contrary, ver. 10, 11, 12, cited out of Psalm xxxiv. Another reason or motive, to provoke them to such conduct towards their persecutors, is, because this would be for their security, as in the words of the text. "And who is he that will harm you, if," &c. The interrogation implies a vehement negation. "Who is he?" None will do it, nay, indeed none can do it; either they will be overcome and convinced by your good deeds, or, if not, should they go on doing their worst, it will be but some outward prejudice; they may do much against you, but it will be no real detriment when all things are cast up. You may meet with difficulties and discouragements, with disturbances and divertisements; yet, when all is summed up together, in the conclusion it will appear that you are no losers. Let your persecutors do what they will, mind you your work; it will be the best course that you can take to keep on in the path of piety, for there will be your security.

Doctrine.—The way of real sanctity is really a way of safety.

Or, you may add, as being somewhat more agreeable to the coherence; in suffering times, the way of real sanctity is really a way of safety.

We shall endeavour to prosecute the observation,

First, By way of explication. And here our province will be, to open the nature of this real sanctity, or holiness, which is the same. And observe there are two descriptions of holiness, both of which are requisite. The one in the principle, this is in the heart. The other in the practice, this is in the life. There is holiness in the root, and holiness in the fruit.* The first is necessary to the second; for that which is not, cannot act; there must be a principle, else how should there be any operations? and the second is necessary, as a proof and discovery of the former.

1. There must be holiness in the principle.

There must be a real thorough change, wrought in the soul by divine grace. The understanding must be enlightened, the will renewed, and a peace concluded between God and the soul; no less will serve your turn. If a man be not alive, how can he walk? It is not to be expected. There must be spiritual life, or else how should there be spiritual acts: for every tree brings forth fruit after its kind, both in a natural and spiritual sense. Can any one imagine, that they who are spiritually asleep, yea, dead in trespasses and sins, should run in the ways of God's commands, and that with an enlargedness of heart? Whilst a person is in his old frame, a captive to Satan, a stranger to God, he has not got into this way, and how then should he walk in it?

2. There must be holiness in the practice.

This is the exercise of the former principle in the life and conversation, this springs from the other, and is a manifestation of it, and these must go together. Those things which we own, believe, and possess, must appear to the world for the conviction of beholders. We must do works which may be seen, though not that they may be seen. Christianity is more than a notion, or a nice speculation.

We are far from decrying practical godliness; though our holiness be not that for which we are justified, yet it is that without which we shall not be saved. This is the way both to glorify God, and to be glorified by him: and he that is endeavouring to find out a nearer way to heaven, is but labouring in vain; yea, he is industriously at work to destroy himself. It is necessary that thou have the root of the matter in thee, and this manifested by the fruits of new obedience. A principle of holiness there must be in the heart, and the practice of it in thy life; these the Lord hath joined together in those

* In actu primo, et in actu secundo.

that belong to him, and he is no good man that puts them asunder. So that you may take this account of our sanctity, that holiness, (as it is in us) consists in our complete conformity to the Holy One. Godliness is God-likeness.

This conformity unto God is two-fold.

First, Our holiness includes a conformity to the nature of God. We must be holy as God is holy; though we cannot be equally so, according to our sphere and finite capacity; an equal degree of purity is beyond our reach, and therefore not enjoined. God is the Holy One by way of eminency, far surpassing both men and angels. He is essentially holy, we but participatively so; it is but a quality in us, it is essence in him. He is holy effectively, for he makes others so; now this, as to us, is impossible; men may be made instrumental to convey holiness, but they cannot bestow it by a proper efficiency: this appertains not to a created, but a creating power; yet we must have the same kind of holiness. A copy may have the likeness of the original, though there be not the same perfection; so, though believers have not an equal degree of holiness with God, yet they may be like him.

Believers are said to be partakers of the divine nature; namely, as they resemble God in his attributes. When we are patient, merciful, just, faithful, true, loving as God is, we shew forth the divine attributes unto the world. Hereby God becomes, (as it were) visible in man, when we show forth the virtues of him, "who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light." We must resemble him in his affections. When we love what God loves, when we hate what God hates, when what pleaseth God pleaseth us also, when what provokes his Spirit provokes ours: this is holiness in us, as it is in conformity to his nature.

Secondly, Our holiness requires that there be a conformity to the will of God. The will of God is the rule of holiness, as his nature is the pattern of it; and there is no more of holiness in any work, than there is of the will of God in it. David as a holy man, is described by both these in Acts xiii. 22, "A man after my own heart;" there is conformity to the nature of God: "who shall fulfil all my will;" there is conformity to his will. The result of both is holiness. So our conformity to God, is our imitation of him, and by our walking with him we make him our pattern, and his will our rule. If we walk in the way of holiness, we regulate ourselves, and all that we do according to the divine laws, not consulting secular interest or what carnal reason would suggest, but what says the Lord in such and such a case? how runs the will of the Great King? what say the statutes of heaven, in this and the other matter?

When others inquire what says such a neighbour, and such a friend? the good man goes and consults the sacred oracles: his question is, what says God?

This conformity to the will of God is,

1. To what God wills not to be done, respecting what is sinful in conduct.

We must maintain the power of holiness in combating with sin; we must not meddle with it on any account, either greater or less; we must abstain from all appearance of evil. Thou dost not spend thy time in gratifying the sensitive part, in "making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof," as some do; thou dost not run with them to their excess of riot; thou art no drunkard, no adulterer, no reviler, no extortioner, nor unjust, &c. &c. it may be, no saint either for all that: it is possible it may be so, look to it, that it be not really so. It is not enough to be free from gross pollutions, we must labour to keep conscience clear, that the bird in the breast may be always singing. The foolish pleasure of a vain world must not charm and allure us; we must keep ourselves unspotted, having nothing to do with the unfruitful works of darkness; for our unholiness arises from our conformity, or adhesion to those things which are unclean, and unholy. We should consider whether such a thing we are about to meddle with, be lawful or not; and whether it be expedient or not, at such a time, in such a place, with such company, for such a one, &c. &c. and rather deny ourselves than offend others. We must maintain our ground in a vigorous resistance, and be waging war with sin every day, endeavouring by all possible methods and prescribed means to get rid of it. Be laying at the root of sin every day, not only now and then, when corruptions stir somewhat more than ordinary; for if they get strength again, thou hast new work. The heart must be cleansed from sin, and filled with grace, and this exercised and evidenced in the life; that will be the way to maintain the power of holiness.

2. Our holiness includes a conformity to the will of God, in what he wills to be done: and this respects our performance of duties. These duties are,

(1.) Such as belong to God.

Public duties of religion; holiness is inclusive of these: they that would be found walking in the way of real sanctity, must be careful to attend upon God in the public ordinances of his appointment, and institution. Surely this is one part of a holy life, to seek God where he may be found; we must wait on him in the solemn assembly, there doth he usually meet his people and bless them; those that go to meet him there do not

usually lose their labour, unless it be through their own negligence and inadvertency.

Private duties of religion belong to the way of real sanctity: we mean those which are kept up in families. Our holiness must appear, not only in God's house, but also in our own; those that live together, should serve God together. Our houses should be houses for God, nurseries of religion. There, those that are heads and governors are concerned mostly, though not only. Alas! it is matter of lamentation, that so many families are schools for Satan, where nothing is to be heard but wickedness, that there are so many families where God is not called upon.

Secret duties of religion must be performed by those who would walk in the way of holiness. There are prayer, meditation, and heart examination, which must be looked after in secret. Many duties a pious person has to perform, that none must be privy to but God and his own soul. He has much work alone; there he must look into his own heart, there he must look up to God to fetch down blessings from above.

And here take notice of one thing, these duties must all be performed, one as well as another; we must not pick and choose those only that are suited to our humours; we need all the help heaven-ward that we can get: we often need refreshing and strengthening in our journey, and if we neglect to draw near to God in some duties, no wonder if he withdraw from us in others. It may be, sometimes, thou wantest God's company in the solemn assembly; public ordinances are empty cisterns, thou dost find little or no advantage from them, there is little savour in the word, it doth not come warmly to thy heart; it may be, God had not thy company in the morning; thou wantest his presence in public, he did not find thee seeking him in secret upon thy knees, and therefore withdraws. So again in the evening, thou hast been negligent in thy public attendances, and when thou waitest on him in thy secret addresses, thou art left to thyself. If we would have God to meet us in one duty, we must wait on him in all, or else it will be more than we have any ground to expect if he meet us in any appointment.

(2.) Such as belong to man.

The duties of our relations, belong to the way of sanctity.

Much of the power of God lies within doors; the noise and stir we may make about religion amongst others, will signify little, if those that are with us every day, and have opportunity to know us best, speak least of our holiness. He that is really holy, is concerned conscientiously to discharge relative duties. There are some who talk at a great rate abroad about religion, but they do not walk regularly at home. They that are more

sincere and industrious, seldom make a great noise about what they do; it is not usual for them to sound the trumpet of their own praise. Relative duties must be regarded, as well as those that relate to God, more immediately.

In the duties of our particular callings and dealings in the world, our holiness must appear. We must be "holy in all manner of conversation," for nothing is well done, that is not done religiously: we must not trade, and deal, and traffic in the world as men, but as Christians. We must be found in our particular callings, for idleness is against both reason and religion; neither must we suffer our particular callings to interfere with what is general. Our religion must not be confined to our knees, it must be brought into our shops; it must appear in our bargaining, buying and selling, and conversing with others. Our holiness must appear in every thing we do, in sacred things, in civil, yea, and natural too. Our eating and drinking must be according to divine direction; we must do all things by rule. Our dressing and adorning come under scripture regulation, yea, our sleeping too; we should be careful lest God find us in our bed, when he expects us on our knees. We might have branched these things into more particulars, but you may easily multiply them in your meditation, for our holiness must be universal. O how large and extensive is the work of a Christian! We have but touched upon these things last mentioned, designing to press them in the application.

SERMON II.

HOLINESS THE WAY OF SAFETY.

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1 Peter iii. 13.

And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

We shall proceed in a few things further, which may serve, partly, by way of explication, giving us to understand the nature of true holiness a little better, and partly instead of application. We hope it may not be altogether unprofitable, nor

do very much injustice to the rules of method. From what has been said, it appears, that holiness is more than,

1. An enlightened head.

There must be an inward principle; so that there is something more required than an orthodox judgment, to constitute a real saint. A learned head, with an unholy heart and ungodly life, will not do. Many make a noise about religion, who, if they were really sounded to the bottom, would be found very shallow. If talking might pass for doing, if pretending to religion might go current for the practice of it, then we might find sundry who have their faces Zion-ward; but, alas! many have light in their heads, but no heat in their hearts. Some think they are far enough, if they can talk of the church, and discourse of religion in company; they have a glib tongue, and an extemporaneous wit, and they can hold an argument almost on any point in doctrine or discipline; they can plead for such a mode of administration, such a form of church-government, &c. and here you have the sum total of their evidences for heaven; though they never felt the power of divine grace overcoming their wills. Inquire of such persons about the things of nature; yea, or of scripture, as to the notional part, their answer is quick and ready: but ask them any thing of religion, where experience is concerned, to give an answer, and then they are nonplussed; you talk as strangely as Nicodemus thought Christ did, when discoursing about the great mystery of regeneration; you are got out of their element, and they are ready to say with those in Ezekiel, "Doth he not speak parables?" Or, it may be worse, with the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, "What will this babbler say?" How will some poor, yet sincere Christians in their rustic coats, who in many things can scarcely speak sense, when they come to the experimental part of Christianity, puzzle and confound the profoundest doctors and rabbies of the day, notwithstanding all their sublimated notions.

Sirs, parts are not piety, whatever you may fancy; there are many learned heads in hell, and others going thither. Thou mayest dive into the intricacies of nature, and be able to give a philosophical account of most difficulties that occur; thou mayest be acquainted with the notional part of the gospel, and be able to unriddle the mysteries of salvation; thou mayest have the bible in thy head, so as to command every verse almost at thy finger's end; thou mayest be admired for thy acquirements and attainments, the trumpet of thy fame may be sounded through the country where thou livest, and yet thou mayest be a learned ignoramus, and go with a lighted candle in thy hand

to hell. Many can discourse long and learnedly on the heavens, but know nothing of God in the heavens; they are quick-sighted in natural things, but in spiritual, fools. Holiness is more than,

2. Faint and feeble wishes.

There is a great deal of difference between wishings and wouldings, and doing. If some cold, faint desires, without suitable and sincere endeavours, would carry us to heaven, it would not be long before some persons were there; if a few good wishes would storm the kingdom above, we should talk no more of a holy life. But let none dream away their days with this groundless imagination, that a sick-bed's "Lord have mercy upon me!" Or a Balaam's "O that I might die the death of the righteous!" will carry their souls into eternal bliss. Oh! how dull and stupid are many in the great business of eternity, and loth to stir; yet they can wish as well as any, and if that would suffice, they would not be sparing; words are cheap, and we might have enow of them. Their usual language is,* O that this were working! O that they had grace! O that they could live as such, or such! Whereas they never endeavour to do it. Sometimes upon their miscarriages you shall hear a heartless petition, God forgive me! upon some surprising and unexpected news of danger, then, God bless us! But according to their usage it is so far from being prevalent, that it is really a taking God's name in vain. Faint and feeble desires, without any impression of holiness upon the heart and expression of it in the life, will leave the soul in horror at last: those that are cold wishers and woulders, but will not be workers, must burn in a hot hell. The way to heaven is up hill, and requires pains; there must be active and unwearied diligence, or else we fall short: whereas it is an easy matter to tumble down into perdition. Holiness is more than,

3. Mere morality.

Holiness and harmlessness are really two distinct things. Morality is of use, as far as it goes, and it is to be desired that there were more of it in the world, yet it is not sufficient. It is to be feared this will be the bane of many souls, they have lived soberly and honestly in the world, they mean nobody any harm, and yet are going but a more smooth and unsuspected way to everlasting misery. Thou must get further than thy good meanings, or else thou art as near to heaven as ever thou art like to be. Thou sayest thou meanest well; but I say, good meaners are but meanly good. Thou dost not shew much in thy life, but thou hast a good honest heart thou sayest: alas!

* O utinam hoc esset laborare!

thou sayest thou knowest not what, thou speakest an impossibility. It is an unjustifiable notion, yea, nothing but contradictory nonsense, to plead for the regularity of thy heart, whilst there is nothing of it in thy life; it will be as near truth to call black, white: doubtless there are many good meaners in hell, who pretended their hearts were good when on earth, however it fell out that their lives were ill. The religion of some persons runs all upon *nots;* they are *not* such and such; like their predecessor the boasting Pharisee, who for all that was disowned by Christ. Not only the unruly servant, that beat his fellow-servants, is cast into hell, but the false servant too that did not improve his talent; he did not make his talent away, he gave the Lord his own, and yet, because he did not improve it, he is called an unprofitable servant, and sentenced to depart as such. A negative righteousness will not do; it will not be enough at the last day, to say, Lord, we have done no hurt in the world, for he expects that we should do some good. Holiness is more than,

4. Flourishing formality.

This is something more than the former, yet short still. All are not saints that seem to be so; there may be, and too often is, the form of godliness where persons deny the power of it; yea, all the religion of too many, is but a formal, lifeless thing. A little they do for fashion's sake; but they are far from making it their main business, and the grand concern of their lives. Some persons' holiness is only a little knack they have got, not that they matter it at all, only they would not be branded by their neighbours, with the black ignominious mark of being irreligious. Some are Christians because christianity hath been handed to them from their ancestors, and they can give no reason why they are so, but because they were brought up so. Ask them why they are of such a religion; well, because their father was of that persuasion, and so was their grandfather, and all their ancestors, as far as they can remember. They are heirs to their father's religion, as they are to his estate, and so it descends to posterity, and passes from one generation to another, being handed down by tradition; this comes far short of what the Lord requires. These mere formalists are usually for the religion of the state, that which is uppermost and most in vogue, having a desire to be in the fashion in one thing as well as another: thus are the times, and therefore thus are we. Others do thus, and we are resolved we will not be branded for schismatics, they shall never have that to cast in our teeth; we will keep our church, and mind our prayers, and we do not question but that we shall do as well as

any precise zealots that make such a stir about religion. "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we;" our church hath appointed such and such things, and they inquire no further. It is indeed a dismal consideration to think how many there are who go under the name of Protestants, who think themselves good Christians and you shall undergo the lash of their censures if you do not think so too, who get not a jot further than a little flourish in religion, a little painted holiness they have to entertain the eyes of the beholders, that they may not see their deformity; and that is all they have, but not all that is required. Holiness is more than,

5. Hypocritical pretences.

Hypocrites pretend to greater strictness in religion than those last mentioned, but they miss it in their aims and designs; they do not what they do from a right principle and for right ends. It is real sanctity we have been speaking about; now that of the hypocrite is but counterfeit, and observe,* counterfeit piety is double iniquity. Great is the difference between a real saint and a hypocrite; though outwardly you can scarcely distinguish them, nay, it may be, the hypocritical pretender in some external performances, shall outdo him who is a real worshipper. See him in his holiday's dress, and you would really think he is a saint, and yet it is but a more cunning artifice he has in duties than his neighbour: it may be the devil hath faster hold on such than many others. How many of us belong to this number, and who they are, the Lord only knows. There are many who are willingly brought to the outworks of religion, that take little pains with their hearts; most they do is to be seen of men, and, "verily they have their reward." Many who will read and pray, and hear and perform many duties, especially such as come under others' observation, whose hearts are not right with God; they bow to Christ in compliment, with cap and knee, but are not ready to do what he commands. A hypocrite may pray neatly, orderly, and fluently, and yet not believingly and experimentally; yea, it is possible he may pray himself into hell. Holiness is more than,

6. An intermitting zeal in religion.

This is that which is opposite to a uniform, regular, steady walking. Some will needs be religionists, and walk in the way of holiness, but they are not orderly in their steps; sometimes they run, sometimes they stand, they have many and long intermissions, as persons in some distempers, they have their hot and cold fits; sometimes a feverish heat, sometimes an aguish coldness. O! what a fever-burning zeal for religion some-

* Simulata sanctitas est duplex iniquitas.

times, at other times, they can scarcely afford it a good word. Holiness, in the power of it, doth not consist of such ups and downs. It is true, an honest, sincere heart may be out of frame; but though the stream be muddy, yet there is a spring that will cleanse it in due time. If we would walk holily, we must walk regularly; it is not sufficient to keep up a round of religious duties, and think we may do what we please betwixt times, as though when we had been on our knees begging pardon for our sins, we had paid off the old score and might boldly run on a new one. What, pray against sin, and go immediately and sin against our prayers! O daring hypocrisy! Oh, to see a person on God's day, in the solemn assembly, with his hands and eyes up to heaven, wrestling with God for a blessing; another while his eyes fixed on, and, as it were, chained to the minister, catching at every word as it is delivered, and, within a few minutes, to hear the same person, as soon as he is got out of the door, talking idly and vainly, as though he had not been at ease for the want of such an opportunity; yea, and within a few days to see him drinking with the drunken, dishonouring God's name by his notorious sinful practice along with Satan's agents;—this is very sad! Oh, that those eyes which are one while reading God's book, inquiring into the words of eternal life, then trickling down tears in weeping for sin; that they should be another while employed in reading the devil's books, and such as were contrived by hellish policy, and after that gazing on vanity;—this is grievous! Oh, that those tongues, which are heard confessing sin, speaking of it with sighs and emphatical groans, as though the heart were almost ready to break with such depressing, debasing, soul-humbling expressions, as if they would not sin for a world, and another time melodiously singing forth the divine praises; that these should be the week following, blaspheming God's name by their full-mouthed oaths and horrid execrations; that these instruments should be employed to contemn God's ordinances, and vilify his servants,—this is matter of lamentation! Oh, to seem serious on God's day, importunately begging for their soul's salvation, and soon after imprecating their own damnation; raking in the wounds of Christ, enough to make one's ears tingle;—this is exceedingly dreadful! This is not walking in the way of holiness. Holiness is more than,

7. A temporary profession of christianity.

More might easily have been added, as federal holiness, being baptized in infancy, godly education, church privileges, convictions for, and confessions of sin, a partial reformation, &c. Real sanctity is more than these; but we cannot stay to insist upon them.

Our holy walking doth imply constancy. Some flourish a little while, and not having root, they wither away, especially when they meet with the scorching days of persecution. One while, "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest;" the next news, it may be, we hear of them is, they have turned their backs upon the ways of God, and side with the ungodly multitude. One while, "Hosannah to the Son of David;" within a very little while, by the louder cry of their lives and conversation, "Let him be crucified, let him be crucified." One while, own Christ; another while, "Away with him, away with him, we will not have this man, but Barabbas;" not those duties and ordinances, but these lusts, follies, and vanities. This is a going backward, not walking on, for that implies progress and continuation; they that would be said to walk holily, must be "perfecting holiness in the fear of God." It is not enough to begin, go on a little, and then give up; they that are holy must be holy still, not begin in the spirit and end in the flesh, for no grace will be saving, but that which is persevering. A temporary flash and no more, like a vapour that is soon in and soon out, is not the way to be found in the path of safety, and to be preserved when sufferings and afflictions come; no, it is the readiest way to bring these upon us. There is no putting our hands to the plough, no engaging in christianity and then giving up, that will carry us to glory; he that expects the prize must run to the end; he that would be crowned must fight on till he hath gained the victory; no cowards that turn again when they meet with difficulties, have any ground to expect the reward which is promised to all those who overcome.

Our holiness must appear at all times, in all places, in all cases and companies; nothing can be a sufficient plea for verging to a compliance with sin. Every duty should be looked after in its place, and we have work enough to fill up all our time, for the commandment is exceeding broad." It is not enough that thou servest God on his own day, if thou dost gratify thyself all the week after; it is not enough that thou prayest in thy family, or in thy closet in the morning, or in both, if thou keepest the devil's company all the day following. Some on a Lord's day evening put off all their religion with their better clothes, and think what they have done will serve for the next week, though what they did was very meanly too; whereas they should but learn on God's day how to serve him afterwards. Our holiness is walking with God, as Enoch did; a following him fully, as did Caleb; yea, with Zacharias and Elizabeth, "a walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless:" it is serving God uprightly, orderly, regularly,

uniformly, constantly, in a diligent discharge and faithful performance of every appointed duty.

Having explained holiness, another thing in the explication is to shew, what that safety is, to which holiness is the way.

1. It is the way to temporal safety.

This is the way to be freed from outward sufferings, or to be preserved under them. Sometimes God's people are not free from a day of trouble, yet they are preserved under the troubles of the day. When the sea of the world hath been tossed with waves by tempestuous storms, when all things have been unhinged and unsettled, both in church and state, when affairs have been involved and miserably confused in this lower region, though the righteous did not wholly escape such tumultuous distractions, yet they have been kept under them; yea, and inwardly supported so as many did not suppose. Sometimes saints are under sufferings from God, sometimes from men. The Lord doth sometimes lay his hand upon his people and visit them with the rod, yet the other hand is underneath them to bear them up; in this he designs their advantage, to reclaim them from their wanderings, and prevent their going astray for the future. The Lord knows what his poor servants are, and what they can bear, and he treats them accordingly. He that made us, knows our mould, that we are but dust, and cannot bear the stroke of his arm without the auxiliary assistance of his Holy Spirit; therefore when he doth debate, it is in measure, and though the body may suffer, yet if the soul be bettered, what reason is there to find fault? If he do empty us from vessel to vessel, yet if he fill us with his grace; though he do remove comforts, yet if he come in himself and take up his abode with us, we are safe still, and have no reason to repent our waiting on him. Sometimes they are under sufferings from men, it is a day of trouble and rebuke, as in Hezekiah's time, "a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness." It is sometimes a stormy day of persecution, and the instruments of Satan are a little let loose by God's permissive providence, and his servants are hunted as partridges upon the mountains; yet even then the Lord doth wonderfully preserve them; and though they may suffer and lose something for him, they shall lose nothing by him; the sons of violence may so far prevail as to take them off the stage of mortality, yet then there is,

2. Eternal safety.

The Lord lodges them in heaven, and doubtless that, if any, is a place of safety. When the Lord removes them hence, and houses them with himself they are out of danger, and then there is no ground of fear; for who shall scale the walls of the

New Jerusalem, to disturb those that have ascended thither? Yet do not mistake here, though holiness be the way to eternal safety, the path appointed by the Lord for his people by which to reach heaven, yet it is not for your holiness, as the procuring cause, that you must go thither. Alas! when we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants, and it is not possible for us to merit any thing at the hand of God. We must not overlook the righteousness of Christ, he is said to be the way, and none come to the Father but by the Son; and holiness is said to be the way too, for without it none shall see the Lord, yet in different respects; Christ is the way of merit, purchase, and procurement, and holiness the way of means, preparatory meetness, and fitness for heaven; Christ's righteousness and ours have their distinct offices, and both the way in some respects. We have our reconciliation with God, and security from his wrath, by the blood of Christ, and inward peace of conscience from the evidence of our sanctification; yet some, though they pretend to have renounced popery, talk of earning heaven. Ask them how they expect to be saved? Well, by their good works. They think that those who do so and so, shall not surely fall short of heaven at last; if they do, what will become of others more loose and careless than themselves? And so they forget the merits of the Lord Jesus, never considering his procurement of our acceptance with God.

Secondly, The confirmation of the doctrine, and here we shall endeavour to prove,

I. That the way of real sanctity is a way of safety.

1. From scripture assertions and expressions. "He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely," Prov. x. 9. Many politicians can invent ways, as they imagine, to secure themselves, yet when they have done all, honesty will be found to be the best policy. "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me," Psal. xxv. 21. Righteousness is called a breast-plate, for its security. A breast-plate preserves the principal part of the body. A man may lose a leg or an arm, and not lose his life; but a stab at the heart is mortal: so righteousness and holiness preserve the principal part of a Christian, his soul and conscience.

2. From scriptural instances. Many such we find upon record in holy writ, that let us see how the Lord hath signally and seasonably appeared for his people, when in great straits and amidst threatening difficulties. We shall mention a few among many that might be named. Such was the wickedness of the old world, that the Lord deluged it with a flood of water, and there Noah, a preacher of righteousness, is preserved in

the ark when others are swept away. Such was the abounding sin of Sodom, that the Lord destroyed it with fire and brimstone from heaven; but righteous Lot must be first fetched out and set without the city: destruction must not come upon it so long as he remained there.

Famous are those two instances in Daniel, and very pertinent to our purpose. See that in the third chapter. A decree goes forth from the king, that whoever did not fall down and worship the golden image which he had set up, should be cast into the burning fiery furnace. Hard measure indeed, it was come to this —they must either turn or burn; yea, and says proud, blasphemous Nebuchadnezzar, "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" Oh what insulting arrogance! as though he had been the great controller and commander of the world. What! out of his hands? as if man, a worm, was able to grapple with divine vengeance! Yet notwithstanding his great words and daring insolence, Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, are not affrighted. Blessed nonconformists! they are partly as bold as he, though in a better sense; the goodness of their cause helps them to courage. They firmly believe the Most High was above him, and they do not much demur or dispute the point, but are resolved, come what will, they will obey God rather than man: "Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." O heroic, and generous faith! triumphing in the face of danger, yea, what was most likely, in the face of death! The king's command is executed; these three Dissenters are thrown in, and not only so, but the furnace is heated seven times hotter too! The enemies of God would burn his people in hell, if they could, yet the Lord doth preserve them safe in such burnings.

The other is that of Daniel himself, chap. vi. We have an account of a desperate plot that was on foot against Daniel, when he was advanced to a high place, being preferred above the presidents and princes, because "an excellent spirit was found in him." They envy him and would gladly throw him out of place and favour, and they have their diabolical devices and cabals to bring this about. They first seek occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom, thinking to find some misdemeanor or irregular management of matters there; then they would have a plausible plea to endeavour his ejectment: but all their expectations are frustrated, forasmuch as he was conscientiously faithful, "neither was there any error or fault found in him." Their hopes being blasted this way, another

project comes into their heads; for what will not the devil help his agents to do? They now despair of accomplishing their designs, unless they find occasion against him concerning the law of his God. This seeming to be the most likely expedient, they contrived, as one says, an act of uniformity, forbidding by an unalterable law, to ask a petition of any god or man, but of the king, for the space of thirty days, upon pain of death; no less penalty would serve them, designing to be rid of such a factious, obstinate fellow, as they accounted Daniel to be. This was agreed upon, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not, so that there is no dispensing with it; now he that will dare to be disobedient must die for it. They thought that he who prayed so often, would not refrain seeking God for thirty days, and they were not mistaken; for though he knew that the writing was signed against him, yet he kneeled upon his knees, three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks to his God, as he did aforetime; as he did before, so he doth still, he keeps on his course, not baulking his devotion though his life was at stake. They watch him, and found him praying and making supplication to his God. They throw him into the den of lions according to their established law, yet the lions' mouths are stopped by an angel sent from God, and Daniel is as safe there as he was before.—See hence how safe it is to be found waiting on God in a way of duty, not turning aside for fear of men, notwithstanding their big looks and swelling words. We should not decline duty, though the performance of it should be attended with hazard. Some, it may be, are ready to think that there is more danger in our day, Daniel's being an extraordinary case, and that now no such miracles are to be expected. It is true, that was a signal and extraordinary appearance of God in his providence, yet we have seen the point proved also,

3. From our own experience. God is the same that he was formerly, and he has the wonted love for his people that he had heretofore; his hand is not shortened that he cannot save; his wisdom is not yet nonplussed, and never shall be; omnipotence has not acted to the very uttermost. A variety of instances might be given, that show how God has been pleased to step in for the relief of his servants; how he has appeared in the mount of difficulty and extremity since old testament times, yea, in our day. Have not some of us seen a copy written after that original in the case of Daniel? It may be not so terrible, yet some can very well remember how the servants of God, who durst not sin against him, nor disown what they judged to be his will, have been thrown into dungeons and prisons, for acting ac-

cording to their light; they were shut up in dismal cells of darkness, in years not long since past; though, by earnest prayer and diligent searching into those things, they endeavoured to get the best information they could. In some things the case was not much unlike. Men in power found fault with them, as with Daniel, relative to their God, proposing, yea, imposing what in conscience they could not comply with, and because they would not, or rather could not conform to those things which they set up, they must be liable to the lash of antiscriptural penalties. We grant they did not bind them, as the other did Daniel, not to petition God at all, yet it must be according to their mode: worship God any way else, and they were railed at as schismatics, and prosecuted as rioters, when those that were really so escaped without condign punishment. But, blessed be the name of our God, it is not so now, those storms are blown over, being succeeded by a sunshine calm! and though some have said, they would either starve them or damn them; yet we find, through the goodness of God, that they were under a mistake, and we have lived to see that their laws were not like those of the Medes and Persians which altered not. We find it proved by scripture and backed by experience, that it is best to be, and do, and suffer what God would have us: and though his servants and subjects may meet with hardships, yet in due time he will clear up their innocence, and the names of noble patriots that have stood up for the cause of God, and the interest of Christ, in a degenerate age, shall not always be followed with the nicknames of traitor and rebel. Consider,

II. Wherefore holiness is the way of safety.

1. Because real saints have God for their guardian.

The Lord is with his people as long as they are with him. Of whom then should they be afraid that have such a one to protect them? If he be for them, who shall be against them? "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous run into it and are safe," Prov. xviii. 10. The great God, the God of the armies of Israel, is able to defend them, and he will do it; hence it is that he hath bid them not to be afraid: "Fear not, O Jacob, though thou passest through the waters and through the fire, I will be with thee;" and his presence with any, surely doth bespeak their safety; none need question but that he will be as good as his word, for "he is faithful who hath promised." God's people are safe, so long as he reigns in heaven, and rules all their enemies, both in hell and on earth; though they may meet with storms and tempests, yet there is shelter for them in the chamber of his attributes. Infinite wisdom shall be at work to counsel and direct them. The Lord governs the world, and

orders all things by his providence, and will so dispose of matters, you may be sure, as shall not be to the real detriment of those that belong to him. The Lord will overmatch all his enemies, and make their oracles to speak but folly. His power also shall be employed to protect and defend his people, and whoever destroys them must ask God leave; he will baffle all the attempts of his enemies in his due time. All the malicious combinations of the hellish fraternity shall be frustrated; all their daring enterprizes shall be labour in vain; it is not possible that they should ever enervate omnipotence. God is greater than all, and none shall ever pluck his people out of his hand. The Lord hath taken charge of them, he hath bound himself to them by promise, and rather than fail he will work wonders for them. His angels he employs for their safety; they are all "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation;—and the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him." Though saints be the objects of hell's envy, and earth's malice, yet they are God's darlings, and angels' charge. The believer may argue from all God's relations to him. He is my God, my King, my Father, my Husband, therefore he will take care of me; this may well be the inference from such premises; certainly believers may be well assured, that so long as God keeps the throne, so long they shall not want what may be for their good.

2. Because all harm shall turn to the saints' good.

"And we know, that all things shall work together for good," &c. Rom. viii. 28: it is not some uncertain and improbable report, no, we know it; so the apostle saith elsewhere, "All is yours;" a large and comfortable word indeed, *all*, whatever they be, all afflictions, trials, adverse providences, shall end well; so that whatsoever a saint meets with, he will be no loser in the end. "All things work together for good;" take a wicked man and all things are against him: but it is not so here, they work for good, not some only, but all, comforts and crosses, mercies and judgments. Some may think their troubles and persecutions will not, and are ready to say, can any good come out of these? yes, these also come into the number. In such times and by such means their corruptions are mortified, and their graces are brightened; their trouble will be introductive of their triumph. We are short-sighted creatures, we cannot oftentimes understand the design of divine providences, and therefore are prone to misinterpret them; when things go not as we would have them, we are ready to say, all these are against us, when God is intending us great spiritual advantage.

Thou dost not now see the reason of such sharp and severe

dealings, thou canst not spell out the meaning of such variety of afflictions and dark providences, but thou shalt be able. Thou art ready to repine and be uneasy, but in heaven, however, thou shalt see what it was for; thou shalt then understand wherefore such a rod was sent, such an ache, such a pain, such a distemper; and why at such a time, and why it continued so long, and why in such a degree; yea, and that thou couldest not have been well without it; that it was better ordered, than if it had been at thy disposal, yea better than if all the angels in heaven had had the ordering of it. Set this down with thyself, that nothing but sin can really hurt thee; other things may bring some outward disadvantage, but no real detriment. So much may be implied in that, "fear not them that can kill the body, but have no more that they can do;" if that be all, if then they have done their worst, fear them not.

We might have insisted here much more largely, and shown that those things cannot hurt us which are most likely to do it, as assaults of Satan, persecutions of wicked men, afflictions, death, hell, &c. but we shall reserve them to another place.

SERMON III.

HOLINESS THE WAY OF SAFETY.

1 Peter iii. 13.

And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

We shall now pass on to the application, which will consist,

First, Of sundry inferences and uses.

1 *Inference*, If the way of holiness be really a way of safety, then there is such a thing as real sanctity.

It is true, it is that which by many is laughed at and derided; and some look upon real holiness as no more than a melancholy imagination, or the fantastic delusion of men in a dream. Hence it is that they ridicule it almost in every company, and make it the subject of their merriment, by this means proclaim-

ing their own folly; yea, some can boast that at last they are got from under the bondage of that tyrant conscience, as if they had had many struggles and conflicts, and at last with much ado had got the victory. Atheism is at a great height in this our day. Some there are that have attained such a prodigious height in wickedness, that they search diligently into the law of the land, to know how far they may venture in sin, and not come within the lash of it. An unseen world, a state of immortality beyond the grave, are what they laugh at; and those that thus believe, think that they shall cease to be when they cease to breathe; they cannot remember any thing they did before they came into this world, and they think it shall be so when they take their leave of it. O how far is the human race gone! How is man sunk by his apostacy! The present age affords too many instances of those that live, as if there were no God to punish, no hell to torment, no heaven to reward; as if they expected no life after this, saying that religion is only a political cheat, which men of parts have invented to affright persons and keep the world in awe. But the time is coming when such will be convinced of their folly, when they shall see clearly how they have been deceived, for in hell there will be no atheists, then they will believe there is a God, because of finding themselves under the sad effects of his justice: but dreadful will it be, not to believe the being of hell but by being in it.

2 *Infer.* Then it is not in vain to serve the Lord.

Some are ready to reproach and vilify religion, and say there is nothing got by it; why should we wait on the Lord any longer? "What is the Almighty that we should serve him? and what profit, if we should pray to him?" Job xxi. 15. They reckon they may as well give it up; what hath it profited them to have walked mournfully before the Lord? others that regard no such thing, prosper as well every whit as they, and it may be better. Whereas the fault is not in religion, but because they are not more religious; it is for want of sincerity and integrity, that careless pretenders find no more advantage by waiting on God. Though a blind man do not see the sun, it doth not thence follow that there is no such thing in the firmament; others see it and feel its warming, reviving influences. Though formal, hypocritical pretenders to christianity find little or no savour in the things of God, though they do not taste and experience that sweetness, which is to be found in wisdom's ways; yet it is not safe to conclude that none do, for some can say, there is no such pleasure to be found in all the world, as there is in communion with God.

Thou hast served God, thou sayest so many years, thou hast

attended on ordinances and canst not tell that thou art any better than thou wast; more shame for thee, the fault is thine own, it is because of thy negligence, carelessness, and hypocrisy; thou hast not been sincere and in good earnest, but halving it in religion, serving God one while and the world another, and then no wonder thou hast found so little good. Others have sought the Lord and found him; they can say, silence all your censures, ye that are so free in charging religion; speak not so atheistically, ye wicked ones, for I can tell you from good and sufficient grounds, that God doth deal familiarly with men; his comforts have many a time delighted my soul; I have sought him in times of difficulty, he has appeared for me and set my feet in a large place; I have no reason to repent my waiting on him, nay, I have abundant reason for thankfulness that ever I did so.

It is true, sometimes, saints are in the dark and are ready to say, they "have cleansed their hands in vain:" yet the sun shines again when the storm is blown over. Is it in vain to serve the Lord? Let the three children speak, who experienced such a wonderful preservation whilst they kept in his way. Let Daniel speak, who was kept in the lion's den: and many others we read of in holy writ. Those triumphant songs of joy and praise, that shall be eternally warbled out in the regions above, by that celestial choir, are proofs of this, that it is not in vain to serve the Lord: those that have gone by holiness to happiness, who shall be trumpeting forth their hallelujahs with God in glory, do clearly shew what we have in hand. Surely none serve God in vain, but those that serve him vainly. Indeed such is the degeneracy of the present age, that to be accounted a holy person is almost a reproach. Persons may be as loose, profane, debauched as they will; drunkards, sabbath breakers, and what not, and this is no disgrace; nay, these are they that are admired and cried up as good fellows, and the only good company. But if one pray in his family, dare not sin so as others do, he is ridiculed; and what needs so much stir? Do they think that nobody must go to heaven but such precise zealots? Seriousness they account sourness; godly sorrow is but melancholy sighing; faith is but a fancy: and with such harangues, sometimes they divert their brethren in iniquity, declaiming against religion and the professors of it. The day is coming, and it is not far off, which will convince such persons of their fatal mistake, when they will find that strictness in religion was not more ado than needs.

3 *Infer.* Then the way of impiety is really unsafe.

This follows by the rule of contraries. The way of sin is

the most dangerous path in the world; no such peril as in serving the devil. Sinners have more reason to be afraid than others: for what can they expect who have God for their enemy? his face is set against them that do wickedly. The ungodly part of the world are ever in danger of temporal judgments, yea, and eternal too. Whilst they remain in that state, they are obnoxious to the wrath of God, it hangs over their heads continually, and they have nothing to shield them from his fiery indignation. Ungodly men are walking upon the very brink of the pit of destruction, and, if they look not well about them, they will erelong fall in; there are but a few steps between them and death; a little further, and they are swallowed up in everlasting perdition: and if this be safe, judge ye. Alas! how many are dreaming in their fool's paradise, who reckon all is well, act as though nothing ailed them, and yet their case is extremely dangerous: they are safe neither for this life nor the next; of which afterwards.

4 *Infer.* Then for real saints to be immoderately depressed with the slavish fear of men, is groundless and unaccountable.

We find that those who have waited on the Lord, and kept close to him, have been preserved when their enemies have most vehemently raged against them, and this is some encouragement, that what hath been may be again: that God, who hath often delivered, can do so again. Thy enemies are high, and therefore thy spirit, it may be, is low; they are threatening and telling what they will do "they will pursue, overtake, and divide the spoil." But it must be, whether the Most High, who rules the world, will or not; for he can easily break their power, infatuate their counsels, overturn all their hellish policies, and scatter their diabolical contrivances. Cheer up, then, thy drooping and desponding spirit; the Lord, whose throne is in heaven, will "preserve the souls of his saints," and he "will be with them in trouble."

It is a dishonour to God, and a disparagement to his attributes, to be unreasonably afraid of men, Isa. li. 12, 13.—See the place. To fear man is to forget God. We should not be careless and secure, fancying that God will deliver us, when we are no way concerned about our duty. We should have such regulated fears as may quicken us to our work; we should have wakeful and awful apprehensions of things; but not be so cast down, as thereby to be unfit for the duty of our day and place: it is the Lord that comforteth, as in the text last mentioned. What then if men speak proudly? The Lord hath dealt with as great enemies as are engaged against us at this day: he humbled an exalted Pharaoh, and drowned the Egyptian host

in the midst of the waters; he weakened the forces of blasphemous Sennacherib, destroying many thousands in one night by one angel; he brought down the high looks of imperious and insulting Nebuchadnezzar, who arrogantly challenged the living God, when he said, "Who is that God who shall deliver you out of my hands?" he made proud Belshazzar tremble, and he can as easily confound the Assyrian of our day. Where are all the great and puissant enemies of the church, that in former ages have made the world ring with their cruel barbarities? They are gone, and others shall follow in due time. Though thou mayest meet with some sufferings from the enemy, yet so long as they cannot take away thy God, for they cannot part him and thee, thou art safe. Endeavour to get matters clear for eternity, to have things straight between God and thy soul, and some sense of this; then thou mayest say, now world do thy worst. Indeed, an over-timorousness is very prejudicial to religion, and hardening to the wicked. When they see those that pretend to more than themselves, drooping and dejected, will they not say, where is now their living by faith? Where are now those joys and supporting assistances of the Spirit they were wont to talk of? Whatever they pretended, yet when it comes to the trial, they are but like their neighbours. What signfies their religion, which will not now bear them up in a time of hazard and calamity? This is their way of arguing, judging and concluding from the practice, not from the principle.

5 *Infer.* Then to promote reformation, and the practice of serious godliness is the safest and wisest course, both for nations in general, and every one in particular, when enemies are high and insulting, and judgments seem to be impending.

If any thing ruin us, it will be sin; so that reformation is the most likely means for preservation. The more righteous persons there are in any kingdom, the more likely it is to stand; for righteous ones are the pillars of the nation: this is evident from the instance of Sodom. It is for the sake of the saints that judgments are kept off; though they be hated and maligned by an unbelieving world. Our enemies are threatening, and God seems to be threatening too; there is no likeliness of his turning away his wrath, if we do not turn from our sins. Many and great are our provocations, the cry of them is loud and gone up to heaven; the power of holiness is sunk low among us; yea, and all this when we are under such strong engagements to be the Lord's. O what hath the Lord been pleased to do for us! He hath considered us in our low estate; he hath rescued us, even when at the brink of destruction; his

own arm hath brought about our salvation. But a few years ago we were fearing a flood of Popery, which seemed to be coming with a mighty force. Often hath the Lord disappointed our enemies, and yet how little have we, who pretend to be his friends, been won over to him! Doth holiness appear more in us now, when the Lord hath so obliged us, than it did before? Are there any more praying families, more praying in secret, more giving up themselves to Christ, and endeavouring to walk so as becomes the gospel? It is to be feared things are not so. Doth not this bespeak our present state to be very unsafe? Did holiness thrive and flourish more among us, could we see more real and practical godliness, not only countenanced, but vigorously promoted, we should have better grounds to hope for England's preservation and prosperity. Could we see the spirit of holiness reviving, of profaneness perishing, more zeal for God, and more love to his ways, we should be hoping to hear of the downfall of the man of sin. Reformation is the safest way for a nation, if they expect security, and so it is for particular persons. If we would not suffer with others, we must not sin with them: we must look to our duty, and then we shall deliver our own souls. Whilst we keep our way, the angels, yea, the God of angels, will keep us; fear losing your way more than any thing; for it is sin that exposes to misery.

6 *Infer.* Then it greatly concerns every soul, closely and seriously to inquire, whether or not they be of the number of real saints?

Shall we hear so much of the saint's safety, and not be concerned to know whether we are like to partake of it or not? There are some in the world, that are really the people of God, whom the Lord will protect against all the rage and malice both of hell and earth; but are we of this number? One would think, that it should be every one's immediate care to turn in upon himself, and consider how it is with him? Am I under God's special care; or, am I one of his enemies? What evidence have I to prove that I belong unto the Lord? Look into thy heart; turn over the book of thy life, and the book of God; see how the case stands. These are matters of eternal importance; a mistake is more than possible, and exceedingly dangerous. Labour to understand whether or not you are sincere; whether your pretences to piety are any more than mere pretences. Doth your holiness appear in every thing you do? Is the holy and good will of God acceptable to your souls, though you cannot rise up with like readiness to the performance of all duties? Are you for the precepts as well as the

promises? Some are only for the advantages of religion, for that which is mostly for the advancement of their secular interest and worldly grandeur; but are you for those duties that have most of self-denial in them? To perform public duties, by which you may get some reputation and come off with applause, is no great matter; to come and shew yourselves in the assembly, and seem attentive an hour or two, is no great piece of difficulty; but how stand your hearts affected to those duties, which you must perform in secret, and men never know of? Some have no religion, but what every one sees or hears: these will be self-deceivers at last. If thy heart be right with God, thou wilt have frequent business with him in secret, that thou wouldest not have the dearest friend thou hast in the world privy to.

Are you for holiness at all times, whatever may be the aspect of providence? Or, are you cautious and wary, and will venture no further than may be consistent with your worldly advantage, and so as you may easily retreat? We had need be very critical and exact; we cannot be upon too sure grounds for eternity. It will not repent thee when thou comest to die, that thou hast employed thy strength to this end. Set time apart on purpose for this work; away with the trifling impertinences of time and sense, and let thy thoughts dwell upon the great concerns thou camest into the world chiefly to secure. Art thou renewed and sanctified, or rotten at heart? Art thou really holy, or an old creature in a new creature's dress? Let not thy questions be so much, "what shall I eat and drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?" but, "what must I do to be saved?" How may I get my sins pardoned, and my peace made with God? Not what clothes shall I put on? how shall I follow such a fashion? but how shall I follow the Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left me an example how I ought to walk? Be not too confident of thy state: we read of some professors famous in their day, who dropt into hell at last! May it be the lot of none here.

Secondly, The subject of the text authorizes us to reprove sharply,

1. Such as are quietly satisfied in their unrenewed state.

Those that are not yet in the way of holiness, neither are concerned about it, but are under the dominion of sin, and the power of their lusts, cannot be expected to maintain the power of godliness in their lives. Where sin reigns it makes sad work; for however it may be varnished and coloured over, it will be bitterness in the end; for wickedness and wretchedness must meet: where sin goes before, punishment will follow.

How many are there in the world, in the same state they were when they first came upon the stage; and yet are very well content? They are busily following the world, loading themselves with thick clay, providing for themselves and those that shall come after them; but the durable riches and righteousness of Christ, never come under consideration: their religion is only on God's day, and but a very little then either; and so they go dreaming through the world, till at last they drop down into the grave, yea, and what is worse, into hell.

2. It reproves the close, self-deluding hypocrite.

It is real sanctity, and not a counterfeit show, which is the way to safety: so that the hypocrite is here justly reproved. Let not any be deceived, God is not mocked; the hypocrite though he pass long unsuspected, yea, and be well thought of, yet at last will be found out. Now he can personate a saint, and can be much in the performance of duties; we see him every Lord's day at the public assembly, and there is none more devout, there is not a more serious person in all the congregation, to look upon, than he is; and yet, take off the mask which covers his deformity, and you would not think that it was the same person. You cannot escape the accurate search of God; "there is no darkness nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves: for all things are naked and opened to him, with whom we have to do:" and it is prodigious folly once to imagine, that thou shalt ever escape the righteous judgment of God; he will bring to light "every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." The Lord taketh special notice of what we do out of the sight of our fellow-creatures; this will be for the comfort of his own people, and the terror of all rotten-hearted professors.

Art thou really serious and sincere? The Lord observes and remembers all thy secret devotion, those many duties which the world never knew any thing of; and the Lord who sees in secret, will reward thee openly. It may be, thou canst sometimes get into a corner, when those of the same family know not where thou art, nor what thou art doing; there thou canst humble thyself before the Lord; there thou canst plead with him for quickening and strengthening grace; thou canst tell God what a heart thou hast, and that thou dost need his grace, and the help of his Spirit to soften it; there thou canst lament thy barrenness and unprofitableness under the means of grace, and acknowledge thy ingratitude and unkindness to the Lord Jesus Christ; there thou canst beg that God would shed abroad his love in thy heart, thou canst open thy burdened soul, and get help against thy corruptions: though men know not of

it so as to commend thee for it, yet it shall not be lost labour; the Lord sees and he will reward thee. But it is terrible to the hypocritical pretender; for the Lord knows that when he draws near him with his mouth, and honours him with his lips, his heart is far from him; he knows what spiritual impurities are within, and at last, if repentance do not take place, he will lay them open before angels and men.

3. This reproves scoffers at holiness, holy things, and holy people.

If holiness be the way to safety, then surely it is not safe to laugh at it, or those that follow it. There are some who are so far from being holy themselves, that they deride and reproach those they take to be so: these are far from being in the way of sanctity. Some cannot be merry, but it must be with scripture; if they want a little diversion, the saints must be the subject of their discourse; they can vent their profane jests upon the word of God, this is their pastime over their cups upon the ale-bench. How ready they are with their contumelious reflections; they have learnt their father's dialect, they are accusers of the brethren, their speech bewrays them to be Hellians. You know, that in ordinary, we can tell what countryman a person is by his speech, every country having almost a peculiar idiom: so it is here, these scoffers at religion by speaking the language of hell, let us understand whence they are. They have, it may be, a little wit, which they set off with a sort of an air in rhetorical raillery; and O how quick and sharp when they are upon this subject! These scoffing Ishmaelites are seated in the devil's chair, somewhat above their brethren in iniquity, as most deserving the place; and there is less ground to hope that such persons will be savingly wrought upon, who arrive at such a height in sin as to make a mock of it, and to sport with holiness, than others. Persons are got a great way towards hell, when they mock at what is serious, and that with delight. This the Lord will visit for in his due time; for he knows who they are that so dishonour him by reproaching those that are his.

4. This reproves such, as out of a design to be safe in times of danger, have left the ways of holiness.

There are abundance that follow Christ only for loaves, as he himself speaks. When there is something to be had, religion then hath many courtiers; but few will turn to, yea, few that have owned it will cleave to persecuted christianity. There are many summer Christians, who seem to be forward and zealous, when backed with abundance of outward encouragements, but when these are removed, they turn their backs and you see

them no more; in the warm sun they flourish a little, but when nipped with the winter of persecution, they wither and die. Where is the person that dares to be holy in spite of men and devils?

If holiness be the way to safety, surely they are out of their way, that leave it with an expectation to find safety somewhere else. Some are afraid of losing their worldly substance in times of hazard and sufferings, and rather than part with that, they will venture their souls for eternity: Demas-like, they forsake the Lord, "having loved this present world." Sometimes it is a day of trial, and the Lord doth (as it were) say, Who is on my side? When the tree is shaken, rotten fruit falls. We are told by our Lord himself in the parable of the sower, that such as "receive the seed into stony places, receive the word with joy, but not having root, they endure for a while, for when tribulation and persecution arise because of the word, by and by they are offended." Is it likely to get out of the way of danger, by going out of the way of God?" When we meet with sufferings in the way of duty, they are more easily borne, and it is some support to think, that we were acting according to the will of God, as far as we could understand it; but when we run out of the way and afflictions overtake us, and we smart for our folly, this is more close and pressing. Surely it cannot be, that they choose wisely, who incur the displeasure of the infinite God, who is a consuming fire, to avoid the consequence of man's displeasure? Is it not folly to run upon the point of a sword to avoid the scratch of a pin? That is the case here.

SERMON IV.

HOLINESS THE WAY OF SAFETY.

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1 Peter iii. 13.

And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

We now come, thirdly, to the exhortation. And here I shall address myself,

First, To sinners.

Labour for this holiness both in heart and life; exert your utmost endeavours to get into this way of safety; and content not yourselves in your present state and condition. Did you but really know, and thoroughly believe it, you would begin to look about: that you are not sensible of your danger, doth not at all make it less than it is; it is exceedingly great whether you believe it or not.

We shall propose and press home some awakening motives,

1. Consider, unholy ones whilst such have no ground to expect either temporal or eternal safety.

Judgments, even in this life, do perpetually hang over their heads; they want nothing but divine commission, and then they fall on them and seize them immediately. There is no outward calamity, be it ever so ill, but thou art obnoxious to it every moment, so long as in an unrenewed state; and when it is a day of trouble and distress, what ground hast thou to hope that it shall be well with thee, so long as thou art such? Is it any wonder if thou fall into the enemy's hand, seeing thou thyself art an enemy to God? In a time of public calamities, and national distractions, the wicked are in the most dangerous circumstances; when the world fails, what can they seek to for comfort, who have not a God to go unto? And it will be no easy matter to bear up under the weight of sin, and the weight of judgment too: "What will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave your glory?" Though saints may stand undaunted, yet sinners have reason to tremble when they hear the sound of the trumpet, and the alarm of war.

Sinners must not expect eternal safety. It is the established decree of heaven, that "without holiness, none shall see the Lord;" it is the unalterable resolve of the immutable God; the unchangeable law of him who cannot lie. There is not the least door of hope for us to escape the torments of hell, unless we be changed by renewing grace: none but "the pure in heart shall see God;" no salvation from hell for any, but those who are saved from sin; the wicked must "be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Christ came not to save his people in, but from their sins. He is "the author of eternal salvation;" but it is to those that believe; and if thou art not of that number, thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter. This is the concurrent stream of the whole scripture; nothing is more plain and more acknowledged, and yet many live as if they did not believe it; it may be, we own that the wicked must be separated from God, but we have good thoughts of

ourselves, and do not closely weigh whether we be of that number or not. Sinners must either be brought off their old stock and ingrafted into Christ, or else have their lot assigned with those, who are weeping, and wailing, and gnashing their teeth. There is no neutrality here, no middle place for dislodged souls; either ever with the Lord, or never there. Holiness is the only way to happiness, and we must go by grace to glory if ever we reach it.

2. Consider, unholy souls remaining such are not fit for having communion with God, either in grace or glory.

Where there is no union, there can be no communion; now that there is no union between Christ and unbelievers is without doubt: and as long as it is so, there can be no communion in duties. Whilst you are strangers to God, you can have no fellowship with him; how can they walk together that are not agreed? "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15. We may attend with others in the most sacred ordinances, and yet have no communion with God there. An unholy heart hath no dealing with God in his appointments; he comes and goes, and meets with no spiritual refreshments; he finds nothing of the sweet, soul-transporting communications of divine grace, that some others enjoy. Thus it is with many a soul I verily fear; they come and hear with some seeming delight, and go away fancying they have received advantage; but if they come to examine afterwards, they either find they got no good, or else they have lost it: they fancy they tasted when they did not; they liked the sermon well in hearing, but what was in it they do not well remember, and some there are to whom you must allow a considerable time, before they can tell you where the text was. Thy heart must be changed, and thou brought over to God, or else thou wilt find duties and ordinances to be but barren and empty cisterns; thou missest that soul-satisfying communion, and those solacing delights, which saints experience, when the Lord takes them into "his banqueting-house, and his banner over them is love."

Such are not fit for communion with God in glory. Alas! what delight would a wicked man take in heaven were he there? His nature is not suited to the place, so that he would not be pleased with the work of it. What would be those melodious notes, sounded by the triumphant choir above; what would be those lofty, charming strains, where there are no jarrings or untunable voices, to a vain sensualist, who is more taken with the harsh and unpleasant notes of sensual pleasure? What

would they be, more than music to a brute? The wicked would find no company in heaven fit for them. What would you do without new hearts in the New Jerusalem? Without clean hands and pure hearts, what would you do on God's holy hill? Set aside the decree of God, and yet the very nature of the thing doth require them to be holy, who have to do with such a holy God, in such a holy place.

Is it likely, that those who have no delight in serving God now, to whom duties are a burden, and sabbaths tedious, should have delight in spending an eternal sabbath with him in glory? Now, sermon-time is long, and prayer-time is long, and they are wishing the minister had come to an end before he hath half finished; they are glad when they are come to their worldly employment again. Could these be delighted to sing the praises of God through a long eternity? How can we reasonably suppose it? How could they be continually admiring and adoring the perfections of God, who are now bespattering them in his saints? How should they admire what they hate? It is impossible for thee, O sinner, to reach heaven in thy old frame, in thy natural and unregenerate state; and if thou couldst, heaven would be no heaven for thee; thou couldst never be delighted with what thou dost disaffect, for thou art not in a capacity to have communion with a holy God.

3. Consider, a reckoning day draws near, when unholy ones shall receive that sentence, which will determine and unalterably fix their everlasting abode.

"The coming of the Lord draws nigh; the Judge standeth at the door;" the great day of general judgment is not far off, and a particular judgment to every person at death is nearer; if thou live fifty or sixty years, which is more than can be supposed as to many, yet they will soon be over. O that we could a little in our calm and sedate thoughts, imagine the judiciary process at the solemn day of accounts! O that we could in our minds paint out what will be the proceedings, when the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open to the view of the world, when Christ comes to judgment! What if we saw the world dissolving; the glorious appearance of the supreme Judge, coming in flames of fire, surrounded with his royal guards, the angels, those heavenly courtiers! What if we saw all the sons and daughters of Adam about to receive their eternal doom! Where then would you desire to stand? at the right or left hand? And who can tell, how soon we may see these things? yea, for any thing I know, the next time sundry of us here may meet, will be at the bar of God. The Lord will summon you and me, with the rest of the world, to appear

before him; and woe then to the Christless, graceless sinner. Ministers shall be brought, as divines usually represent it, to witness for the Lord against those ungodly ones they had to do with and could not gain. Amongst others, he will say, come, all you my messengers and ambassadors that have been employed in my work at Pontefract, amongst those sinners of the Gentiles there. Did not you warn them, and treat with them, and tell them of their danger? Did not you offer grace and salvation to them by a Redeemer?

Yes, Lord. According to our capacity and ability, as thou gavest in to us, we gave out to them. We have wooed, and entreated, and beseeched in thy name, many a time, that they would be reconciled unto God; but for all that we could say or do, we could not get them to move. We have often had many a perplexing thought in our closets, not knowing what to say to those we had to address; we would gladly have taken any way that might have won them, Lord, thou knowest; we have sat poring and pondering, and considering what words to choose, that were most likely to be successful and to reach their hearts, and set them a seeking thee: we tried every way we could think of, sometimes speaking from mount Ebal, sometimes from mount Gerizim; sometimes we endeavoured to draw and allure them, to win them with mercies and inviting promises; we endeavoured to paint before them the beauties of holiness as well as we could, and set before them the feast of fat things, and the never fading glory of the New Jerusalem; we held forth the Lord Jesus Christ on gospel terms, spoke for him in the most taking words that we could think of; we told them of his comparable amiableness and divine attractions, how that he was "the chief among ten thousand, yea altogether lovely;" but the pleasing charms of gospel grace did not affect their stupid hearts.

Another while we endeavoured to affright and drive them from sin, by telling them what would be the miseries of the heirs of hell; we told them how impossible it was to have Christ and their lusts too; that unless they were sanctified they could not be saved. Many alarms were sounded to rouse the secure, many a dreadful peal of sin's punishment rung in the ears of careless and unconcerned souls, and many an awakening anathema awfully denounced. We endeavoured to set forth the horrors of the place of misery, to represent the terrors of the lost crew, to decipher the dismal state of the infernal society; we told them of the day of judgment, and of those things which are now come to pass; but they did not prepare for it, they acted as though they scarce believed what we said; though we

made known the terrors of the Lord, they would not be persuaded. We prayed with them and for them, and preached to them with all the earnestness we could; but when our eyes were wet, theirs were dry, and they, almost as unconcerned as the seats they sat on. It would have been our joy and our crown could we have brought Christ and their souls together, and to have seen the Lord Jesus formed in them. O how glad should we have been, if, by our instrumentality, they had been turned to righteousness; if after we had called and cried, after we had tendered thy grace, spoken of thy love, acquainted them with their danger, we could have heard them sensibly cry out, "what must we do to be saved?" This would even have made our hearts to leap within us. We have waited long for this taking place, but after all we left them as we found them; those that were filthy, were so still; the wicked, were so still; those that we found unholy, when we had done our best, were unholy still: and if they be so till now, Lord, we cannot help it. What sentence will follow hereupon, your own reason and consciences will easily suggest; surely then will the Lord say, "Those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me." How sad will it be, to go from hearing and reading, and praying and singing together, to howl with devils and damned spirits! O that these things may never witness against any soul in this assembly! May all be persuaded to look after the things of their peace, before they be hid from their eyes.

4. Your distinguishing names, numerous train of duties, and multitude of religious performances, will not be sufficient and prevalent pleas, if you should be unholy at the day of reckoning.

It will signify little what passed in this life, if you die in a state of estrangement to God. We are not for tying religion to a party, however some may please to brand us; we are far from saying or thinking that none are really Christians, but such as are for our modes and way of profession: we would own those that profess faith in Christ and live up to it, and believe that the Lord hath children having various sentiments and apprehensions. Let none please themselves with this, that they belong to such a church, and they are true sons of it; thou mayest be a member of the best constituted church in the world, and yet be a hypocrite. If at the great day it appear, that thou art unrenewed, it will signify nothing what men called thee here; whether conformist, dissenter, episcopalian, presbyterian, independent, &c. (names that we would have buried) if thy name be not written in the Lamb's book of life. The name thou

didst pass under here, will not give thee admission into the church triumphant above.

Your many duties and religious performances will not excuse you. Your light may be great here, and your darkness so too hereafter; you may be advanced now in privileges and at last thrust down to hell for the non-improvement of them. We read of some who will say, "Lord, Lord, open to us, have we not eaten and drunk in thy presence, prophesied in thy name," &c. They seem very confident, they seem almost to demand it, "Open to us;" we have done so and so; yes, as if our Lord should say, you have waited on me as you plead, yet depart, for you "are workers of iniquity." They never dreamed of meeting with such a repulse; what! we shut out that have attended on thee so long in ordinances! we, that have taken so much pains, and gone so many miles to sermons on Sabbath days and lecture days, and sometimes with much hazard! what! we shut out after all this! We have opened our doors to thine, and wilt not thou open heaven's door to us? We that have been so near thee, must we depart from thee? Yes, I am not mistaken, notwithstanding all your pretences, I know you well enough who you are: I was never yet entertained in your hearts for all your fair show, and whatsoever you might make others believe. My ministers, it is true, took you into their communion, they admitted you into their societies, for they could but judge according to outward appearance, and the direction of charity; you seemed saints, and they were bound to think you such; but for all that, you cannot deceive me, "I search the heart and try the reins," and can tell how you have harboured your lusts, mine enemies, whilst I have been shut out; therefore begone, "depart, ye workers of iniquity, I know you not:" a cutting sentence from the great Judge. It will not do to plead that you sat under such a one's ministry, that you were a member of such a society; no, were you so, it is so much worse, it aggravates your case, that you were false-hearted and hypocritical under such great privileges.

Objection. But it may be, some are ready to say, you would persuade us that the way of holiness is safe, and that it is dangerous to miss it: but we do not see the way so clear. Doth not scripture say, that "judgment begins at the house of God," and they "that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," and "through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God?" This is the language of scripture, and it hath the language of experience to back it. Have we not seen how such have suffered, and been deprived of their comfortable enjoyments? some have parted with their lives, being burnt at

stakes, some "stoned," some "sawn asunder," some "slain with the sword," and what! would you persuade us out of our senses? For any thing we see, such as you call saints and believers, who make such a stir about religion, fare worse than any others.

Solution. This was in part answered before: but now we shall return a few things more directly, to blunt the edge of this frightful objection, and that briefly in some particulars.

1. By way of concession. We own it hath been so, and it is possible it may be so again, and these things are somewhat starting to sense; yet this doth not hinder but that it is a way of safety: temporal, if the Lord see it good for us, if not, however, eternal safety. Some indeed have met with hard usage in the world from Satan's instruments, and it need not be thought strange, for the seed of the serpent will be warring against the seed of the woman; it hath been so, since enmity hath been put between them, and it will be so still.

2. Instances are not far to seek, which let us see how the righteous have been preserved in time of danger, by keeping close to God in a way of duty. Though they have been set at on every side, the attempts of the enemy have been altogether unsuccessful; they have watched to apprehend them, and the Lord hath watched too, for their preservation; we might easily prove it by sundry examples. Many times when the servants of God have been in danger, and they knew it not, they have had some secret intimations one way or other, some more than ordinary impression upon their spirits, or something hath fallen out providentially, which hath occasioned their removal from such a place, which before they did not design, and it hath afterwards appeared, that if they had staid but till the next day, their lives had been in danger. God hath sometimes delivered his people, before they knew that there was any evil intended against them; he hath signally and seasonably stept in and preserved them from the mischievous designs of malicious men. Sometimes the wicked have been cut off for their sin, and in their sin, which is dismal indeed; and the righteous have been made to dwell in safety. Some in the commission of their wickedness have been struck down dead upon the place, some in their return home, as might be shewn both from sacred and profane history. It is much more sad for sinners to be cut off, for they pass straight to hell. If saints were only in danger, and not the wicked, then there might seem to be ground for the objection, but seeing it is not so, it seems to have no great force.

3. As for the loss of the world, thou art ready to allege. This

will be the ready way to undo myself. It may be thou mayest not suffer much this way, nor part with much of thy estate, all do not; but suppose the worst; what if it should be so? Is it more necessary to be rich in gold than in grace? Are the things of the world so indispensably necessary, that it is impossible for thee to be happy without them? Surely, thou canst not say so; and we can say, that holiness is so necessary, that thou canst never arrive at happiness without it: so that the case lies here, the one is necessary, and the other is not; then surely it may be determined without much ado, what is most eligible: that which is of greatest necessity should be first looked after and secured. Heaven is worth having, though thou shouldst go poorly and meanly to it; and a dear bargain doubtless do they make, who turn their backs upon the way of God, to secure a little of the world, which they must shortly part with, at the furthest.

4. You hear of the sufferings of the saints, but you know not what inward and invisible supports they experience from above; indeed, if they had nothing but what others see, their case would be unpleasant and undesirable: but their heavenly Father gives them many a friendly, refreshing visit that few or none know of. Though the servants of God be sometimes low in the world, yet they have such converse and communion with him, such tastes of his love, as great ones that are wicked are strangers to, and such as they would not part with for their abundance; and so, though they have not such affluence and confluence of creature enjoyments as some have, yet the Lord makes it up in another and a better way. You see their crosses sometimes, but you do not see their comforts, which will abundantly compensate; you hear of their outward temporal losses, but you are not acquainted with their inward spiritual gain; you hear of their sufferings, but not of their supports; you hear of their harsher fare, and this affrights you, but you know not their sweetmeats, and delicate, exhilarating dainties; you hear of their sorrows, but not of their exalted joys in divine embraces, when the Lord Jesus doth clasp them in the arms of love: they have bread to eat that others know not of; joys such as strangers intermeddle not with; these make up abundantly the scarcity of outward things, especially if we look upon them as pledges and earnests of more and better.

5. To consider the issue of the saints' troubles and afflictions, and to compare it with that of the wicked's, would afford much support in this case. The prosperity of the wicked, hath a been puzzling point to God's own children for a long time. It was so with the Psalmist once; when he saw the ungodly pros-

per, he was ready to say, he had "cleansed his heart in vain;" but when he went into the sanctuary of God, he understood their end; he saw they were set in slippery places, and cast down into destruction, Psal. lxxiii. 12—20. Those that are in the way of impiety, may please themselves for a time with their vain, sensual delights; it may be, joy displays its colours in their faces, matters go as they would have them; they have little to disturb and disquiet them, but alas! it is as the crackling of thorns under a pot, it is soon over and gone, and then it leaves a sting behind. Now the saints have not only inward comforts, under outward troubles, but after them too; their afflictions end well, their trials have a comfortable conclusion, they oftentimes reap a great deal of benefit, even in this life, and by them they are fitted for the next. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" 2 Cor. iv. 17. It is but light affliction, and yet there is a weight of glory, it is but for a moment, and yet worketh an eternal weight of glory, which in the original is very emphatical, and we scarce know how to express it in English.

6. Suppose saints should be taken off by a violent death, which is the worst that can be thought of, and most frightful to nature; yet for them to die is gain: and if thou wilt be a disciple of Christ, thou must either lay down thy life for him actually, or in purpose and design, if called to it: Christ will own none that prefer their lives before him. If the enemies of God's people did but know what a good turn they do them by taking them off, it is highly probable they would spare them to be afflicted and punished a little longer. By suffering martyrdom, the saints have a pearl added to their crown, and are sooner possessed of it too. Thou art thinking, it may be, that thou couldst never lay down thy life to suffer for Christ, thou couldst not go through the fire to him; but thou canst not tell, for if the Lord call thee to it, he would vouchsafe suitable help. Some, that before were very timorous and dejected, have been enabled to bear up with christian courage and undaunted magnanimity, not being afraid to look the king of terrors in the face. O with what cheerfulness have some gone to the stake, saying, "Come, it is but a quarter of an hour, and then we shall be in heaven;" with many more expressions, evidencing the like exultation of spirit. Others have gone off the stage of the world with triumph, being about to enter into their master's joy; let us gird up the loins of our minds and say, let us go after as fast as we can; resolving, through grace, that nothing shall be

able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

7. The objection was partly raised from those words: "Judgment must begin at the house of God," and thence was inferred that saints suffer first, therefore they are in most danger; but read the verse through, and then the case is fully determined, that holiness is the safer path; it is 1 Pet. iv. 17, "If it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them, that obey not the gospel of God?" He argues thence, to shew the doleful condition of impenitent sinners: if it be so with us, what will be their lot? surely that must needs be amazingly dreadful! If the righteous suffer something, what then will become of the wicked? Here is an argument to make us quit the way of impiety, and not to plead for it. It is true, saints may suffer; but this is for their good; God may correct his children, and doth so, but it is to drive folly out of them, not to hurt them. Judgment may begin at the house of God, but it is to make way for mercy; those judgments prepare for deliverances here, and glory hereafter; and though they are not secured from affliction, yet they are from hell.

Secondly, To saints.—Which is the second branch of the exhortation.

Be you perfecting holiness in the fear of God; be ye holy in all manner of conversation, yea, be holy as God is holy. The Lord hath been pleased to deal with your hearts, bless him for it, and shew it forth in your lives; let holiness appear in all you do; maintain the power of it; start not back for fear of men; be resolved upon a holy course, come what will.

1. Maintain a high and reverend esteem for the public appointments of Christ, and manifest it by a constant and devout attendance on them.

Beware of having slight thoughts of your spiritual food, (if they be really the truths of God that are delivered to you,) lest the Lord take it away. The gospel is a moveable commodity; Christ stands at the door and knocks; standing is the next posture to going, and it may well be expected that he will take his leave, if he be not welcome; he is not beholden to us for our religion.

Let us manifest that we have such an esteem, by our constant attendance on these ordinances. We should be waiting daily at the posts of wisdom's gates. Where can you expect to meet with God, but where he hath said he will be found? You may find him where he is wont to take his walks, and that is in his ordinances; for "the king is held in the galleries;" thither do

ye come to have communion with him. We should not suffer every little thing to divert us; it may be, that day thou wast absent, something was spoken which would have been of special and peculiar use to thy soul; at such a time the devil is busy to obstruct thee and throw impediments in thy way. We should break through difficulties, and it will be so in some measure, if there be a real spiritual hungering after the bread of life.

Let us be attentive in our attendance on them. We must not only be present, but diligent when we are there; careful so to hear that our souls may live, we should take in food which may be for our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. No wonder if persons be crying out, "O my leanness, my leanness," if they will not come to taste of those provisions which the Lord hath made ready. Do you expect a person to be lively and look well that will not eat? Many would be sorry to have such meals for their bodies, as they put off their souls with. We must not only be careful to come, but mind what we come for, and mind what we are about; it is work enough at once to do it as we ought. Our thoughts are apt to wander, we should endeavour to call them in, and awe them with a sense of an omniscient eye. We should not be plotting and contriving our secular concerns, when about the great and momentous business of eternity; but be wakeful and watchful, else we shall attend but sorrily. God hath not appointed ordinances to sleep at, we have beds for that purpose, and should not choose the assembly for a place to sleep in, as some seem to do by consulting easy postures: it is well if some do not place themselves conveniently for this end, and when they awake, are glad that the glass is run so far.

If there be a due esteem for ordinances, there will be a care to prepare for them. We should take pains with our hearts in secret, and endeavour to get them into a right frame. The Lord knows who of us here, prayed this morning in secret, before we came to seek him with others, and if we did, how we managed it.

2. Conscientiously keep up family devotion.

O that every householder here would say with Joshua: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord," whatever others do; and like David: "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." O that a few things upon this head may be of use, and be followed with success! I fear we have many prayerless families amongst us, many that live year after year, and yet never call upon God together. That family, surely, is in a miserable condition, where prayer is not kept up: "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the

families that call not on thy name," Jer. x. 25: a dreadful text. Is it a desirable thing to be under the wrath of God? What, have you so many family wants, family sins, family mercies, and not family prayer? This is not "praying with all prayer and supplication." Know, that you have the care of souls under your roof committed to you; and to be negligent herein will be of dismal consequence. Have you no pity or compassion for those that are flesh of your flesh? Your praying would teach your children to pray. What is the reason of so many prayerless families? Surely one is, says Mr. Gurnall, "persons were not brought up in praying families, and therefore do not perform this duty; if you pray, it is likely your children would, when they have families, and so religion would be propagated."

But, say some, I pray alone, will not that do? No, it will not, one duty will not excuse another; besides, I doubt dost, thou speakest more in that word *alone* than thou thinkest; thou prayest alone, that is, without God, thou dost not meet with him in secret.—But I have no time. What, no time to serve God? All thy time is to serve him, and must none be spared for this duty?—But my business will not allow me. Will it not? Thy heart is unwilling, that is the chief reason. How unreasonable is this objection, that thy business will not give leave! Man, this is thy great business. Wilt thou tell God at the great day, that thou hadst other work? Why not drive on a trade both for heaven and earth?—But I am ashamed to pray before others. What, ashamed of thy duty? Thou needest shame with nothing but sin. See these, with many more, answered by Mr. Doolittle in his sermon about Family Prayer, Morn. Exer. Thou wantest expressions, thou sayest; nay, it may be, impressions rather. Study thy wants, sins, mercies, this will help thee. Do as well as thou canst, and the Lord will be with thee. He looks not so much at the expression, as at the sincerity of the heart.

I will repeat a passage I lately read, in the life of an eminent minister: he said, "he did not know how a person could be saved, that did not pray in his family." Whether that be absolutely so or not, I cannot tell; but I hesitate not to say, that if a person hath been told again and again that it was his duty, and had it closely urged; to live then in the neglect of it, is a black mark: if Christ be in the heart, he will be in the house. Another passage I met with concerning a town in Switzerland, consisting of ninety houses, which was destroyed by an earthquake, except the half of one house, where the master of the family was earnestly praying with his wife and children upon their

bended knees to God. It is, you see, sometimes of use for temporal salvation.

We might easily enlarge here, but must not run too far. Let me exhort, entreat, beseech you to set about this necessary duty; that your families may be no longer prayerless families. O that you may not be found to have lived all your lives in the neglect of this duty, when death comes to drag you out of your houses! The day is coming apace, and is not far off, when you will, when you must be serious. And you that have been careful and conscientious in performing this duty, go on, it is not long before your praying shall be turned into praising, your hosannahs into hallelujahs.

SERMON V. *

NATURE OF CONVERSION.

MATT. XVIII. 3.

Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

IN the first verse of this chapter the disciples were inquiring, who should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven? But our Lord was resolved to put a stop to their vain curiosity. This he did, first, by a visible sermon: "Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst," that he might teach them the doctrine of humility. Secondly, by an audible sermon in these words: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." We are here taught not to be childish, but child-like in several dispositions. Children are not without their faults; though they may be so young as to be without actual transgression, yet they have the seeds of all the sins in the world in their nature. Little children are generally praised as being without covetousness and ambition. In the text, our Saviour shows us the nature of true conversion, it makes men become as little

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children; and the necessity of it, without it we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. From the text we may observe, 1. The truth of the assertion, "I say unto you:"—I, that am truth itself—that know the terms of salvation—that shall be the judge of quick and dead—that have all power in heaven and in earth, so that none can enter heaven but those whom I let in—I tell you, that except ye be converted, and become as little children, &c. 2. He not only asserts this truth, but confirms it; he that never spake an idle word sanctions it with an asseveration: "Verily I say unto you," &c. 3. See here the positiveness of Christ in what he said: "You shall not enter;" without this change you shall not enter into the kingdom: as if he had said, I have the keys of heaven and keep the door, none can come into that state without my leave, and I tell you plainly, that except ye be converted, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Holiness must go before happiness.

The doctrine we shall raise, and at this time insist upon from these words is, that converting grace makes persons become like little children.

The text and context may have relation to two descriptions of children, those just born, or those who are a little grown. We shall endeavour to shew wherein converts resemble both these. Converts resemble little children newly born:

1. Children enter the world with much difficulty and hazard. So God's children have a difficult entrance into a state of grace; "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God," John iii. 3. He must be renewed by the influences of the Holy Spirit, accompanying the word of God to his heart. And Oh! what pangs and sorrows the poor Christian undergoes, when God first lays hold on him. Many bitter sighs, and tears, and groans are produced ere he is born again. In his fears he is ready to cry, shall I not die before the change take place? "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it," Matt. vii. 14. The entrance into the way of holiness is so narrow, that if ever you be converted, you will experience trouble of soul, that you have been so long in sin, and so long an enemy to God and yourself. There are two descriptions of persons, whose entrance into a state of grace is more difficult than ordinary, namely, rich men, and old men. As for rich men our Saviour says: "It is easier for a a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God," Matt. xix. 24. By a camel, some understand a cable rope; now it is impossible for a cable rope to go through the eye of a needle, yet it may be so untwined

as that in time it may be made to pass: so rich men, though it be hard for them to be converted, may be brought to see themselves so vile and little in their own eyes, that by the grace of God, they may yet be brought through. I have also said it is peculiarly difficult for old sinners to be born again; "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil," Jer. xiii. 23. The longer men live in sin, the more difficult is it for them to be brought to God. All sinners have not the same measure of sorrow and trouble at their conversion, yet all have some experience of it, in some degree.

2. An infant has always a principle of life and motion; so converts have a principle of spiritual life infused into their souls. In God's family there are no abortions; all his children are brought forth into a state of grace; "You hath he quickened who where dead in trespasses and sins," Eph. ii. 1. The poor sinner, when first quickened, is ashamed to tell any body his state; he dares not tell good Christians how it is with him, lest he should prove a hypocrite; he dares not tell the wicked, lest they should laugh him to scorn: notwithstanding this degree of shame, there is life in the soul. Let me ask you now, if you have ever seen your miserable state by nature? Have you ever seen yourself ready to be dragged down to hell torments for your sins? If you are true converts, you have experienced something of this, and have been made alive to God: "To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace," Rom. viii. 6. The carnal mind is dead to God and all holy duties, but is alive to the world and worldly affairs. On the other hand, a gracious soul is dead to sin and the world, but alive to God, delights in holy duties, and can discern a difference between what he was, and the state in which he now is.

3. The child bears the image of the father: so converts bear a likeness to God, they have his image. The image of our heavenly Father consists in "knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness." "Be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind; and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," Eph. iv. 23, 24. Now, has God given you to understand his will more experimentally than formerly? Has he given you the knowledge of himself "in the face of Jesus Christ?" Are your wills rectified, and made conformable to the will and law of God in true holiness? God's children are made partakers of a divine nature. Religion is not only an outward conformity of the outward man to the law of God, but an inward conformity of the soul and all its faculties thereunto, and a Christian's actings in religion proceed from

grace in the heart. What say you? Hath the seed of God's word been sown in your hearts, and formed your natures into the nature of Christ? Saints are "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead; by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." You cannot own God to be your Father, unless you are followers of him as dear children: "As he that hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation," 1 Pet. i. 15.

4. A child comes weeping into the world; so God's children are crying children. As soon as they are born, they cry, "Abba, Father." "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father," Gal. iv. 6. O the tears, groans, and cries of a young convert! He could willingly give himself unto prayer. It was said of Paul when he was converted, "Behold he prayeth." Did you but see the Christian in his closet, you would find him grieving for his sins, praying unto the Lord for grace and acceptance. As a new-born child has no way of expressing his wants, but by crying; so the Christian has no way to express his desires, but by prayer: "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee, in a time when thou mayest be found," Psal. xxxii. 6. Every one that is truly godly will pray. "The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth;" they wrestle like Jacob, who "had power over the angel and prevailed: he wept and made supplication unto him." Hos. xii. 4.

5. There is a natural instinct in children, as soon as born, to seek the mother's breast; so a gracious soul, when newly converted, desires "the sincere milk of the word, that he may grow thereby." There is nothing more nourishing to an infant, or more desired by it, than its mother's breast; so panteth the true convert after God. "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" Psal. xlii. 2. If you attempt to put a little child off with toys and fine things, it will not be pleased long, it will cry for its mother's breast; so let a man come into the pulpit with pretty Latin and Greek sentences, and fine stories, these will not content a hungry soul, he must have the sincere milk of the word to feed upon: "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food," Job xxiii. 12; as if he should say, I love it more than my meal when I am hungry; I know not how to live without it. A poor good woman said, in time of persecution, when they took away the Christians' bibles, "I cannot part with my bible, I know not how to live without it." When a gracious soul has heard a profitable sermon, he says, methinks it does me good at my heart; it is the greatest nou-

rishment I have: "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies as much as in all riches. The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver," Psal. cxix. 14, and 72.

6. Converts resemble little children in their weakness and dependance. Nothing is so weak as an infant when it comes into the world; it is so helpless, that unless some careful nurse take care of it, it is in great danger of being lost. A young convert is so feeble in his own apprehension, that he is now sensible he can do nothing as he ought to do—can neither stand, walk, nor move one step in the way of God's commandments. It is well, saith he, I have a father in heaven to take care of me and help me. I once thought I could have shifted pretty well for myself, have prayed well, and performed duties well, but I see I cannot pray of myself; never surely was a poor creature so weak as I! "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God," 2 Cor. iii. 5. "When I am weak then am I strong," saith Paul; we may, therefore, be glad when we are weak in our own sight, then we look for strength from God. We cannot go a step but when we lean on our God, and if we have any strength to do any thing that is good, we must receive it from God; "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," Phil. iv. 13.

7. There is a resemblance between little children and converts in their harmlessness. Infants are just emblems of innocence and harmlessness; none could dash them against the stones but those who are hardened in barbarity and cruelty; so a child of God, by converting grace becomes harmless. "We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lust and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another; but after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared"—this quite altered us; instead of being hateful and hating one another, we could not lift up a hand or a foot to hurt any body. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.—They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain," Isa. xi. 6 & 9. Those very persons that formerly were like wolves, leopards, and lions for fierceness and cruelty, become like lambs for meekness; though they are the same persons, yet their nature is so changed that they seem as if they were not the same men, they now are "blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke."

Thus we have shewn wherein converts do resemble little infants, we shall now show wherein they represent children a little grown. To such-like our Saviour seems particularly to refer, in the connexion of our text; for it is said, he "called a little child unto him." Converts resemble such,

1. In their guileless disposition. Little children are generally plain and downright what they seem to be, and do not dissemble. A child is known by his doings, and will express his disposition. "Esau was a cunning man," and could hide his intent of killing his brother, but "Jacob was a plain man." David says: "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile," Psalm xxxii. 2; that is, no predominant or approved guile: if a convert finds guile in his heart, he hates, abhors, and strives against it. "I hate and abhor lying, but thy law do I love," Psalm cxix. 163. "Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile," John i. 47; he is an honest, harmless, gracious man; what he seems to be. "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was no guile, for they are without fault before the throne of God," Rev. xiv. 4, 5. Not so liars and dissemblers, that profess something of religion, but make no conscience of secret duties and of truth; they are none of God's children.

2. Little children are of a gall-less disposition; they may be angry, but bear no malice. "Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men," 1 Cor. xiv. 20. Children are sometimes angry and fall out, but soon become friends again; so God's children are "gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits." If a man be implacable, it is not the property or disposition of God's children. "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye," Col. iii. 12, 13. Some have no gentleness towards those that have angered them, but God's children should not let the "the sun go down upon their wrath." "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice, ; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you," Eph. iv. 31, 32. So also the apostle Peter: "Love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous; not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing;" not threatening, they shall have as hot as

they bring: if any of God's children have a rugged temper, they will pray and strive against it, and if at any time they have been overcome by it, they will be more watchful.

3. Little children are submissive to correction. When a child has committed a fault and is made sensible of it, he submits to his father's correction. "We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live?" Heb. xii. 9. The converted soul is so meekened by grace, that he does not attempt to contend with God, and therefore submits. "It is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: that which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more," Job xxxiv. 31, 32. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke;" that is, I think I was the most stubborn and unruly wretch that ever was yoked: but now, he saith, "turn thou me and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God;" I would lay me down at God's feet, there I would lie, there I would cry, and there I would die; if I must perish for my sins, I will submit and say, "The Lord is righteous." When such conduct as this is shown, then God is heard saying, "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him," Jer. xxxi. 18, 20. The converted soul is then ready to say, I bless God who has taken down my stubborn and unruly spirit; the strokes of God did me no good, till the grace of God brought me to this submissive frame and temper of heart.—Has it been thus with you?

4. Little children are full of jealousies and fears. A child fears his father's displeasure, and when he sees him angry is grieved; so a child of God is more grieved to see his heavenly Father offended, than himself afflicted. It is said, Ps. cxxx. 4, "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." A carnal heart would take encouragement from this to sin against God, but a gracious soul will say, if God be so tender-hearted as to forgive my sin, I will be so tender-spirited as to fear sinning against him: I dare never offend so gracious a God; for "they shall fear the Lord and his goodness," Hosea iii. 5.

5. Little children are very affectionate. They will maintain an affection for their parents, companions, and sometimes for strangers who treat them kindly; so God's children love their heavenly Father, the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts: they love their fellow-christians, by this we "know

that we are passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren:" these are the companions in whom is all their delight, those "that fear thee, and keep thy precepts." It is a common saying, birds of a feather flock together: God's children cannot well be alone: when Paul was converted, "he assayed to join himself to the disciples," and when the apostles were "let go, they went to their own company." Heaven-born souls will talk with those that are like them, and love them, but cannot love wicked men: "As touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another," 1 Thess. iv. 9. Heathens were accustomed to say of the primitive Christians, "See how they love one another."

6. Little children are very inquisitive. If a child walk out with his father into the fields, he will ask perhaps twenty questions before they come home again; he will be inquiring, Father, what is this for? Who is that yonder? &c. Thus it is with God's children also; those whose faces are turned towards Zion will inquire: "What must we do to be saved?" They will have something to say to a godly minister; some case of conscience to propose; it is said of God's people—"they shall ask the way to Zion;"—they will be inquiring which way they may get to heaven. The grace of God will make men inquisitive persons.

7. Little children are generally tractable. Children are apt to learn from, and imitate their parents; it is much easier to teach some children Latin and Greek, than it is to instruct grown up persons to read English: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it," Prov. xxii. 6. A new vessel is soon seasoned; so converts are apt to learn. There is one great lesson they must all learn: "No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me," John vi. 44, 45. They are taught by God to pray and believe, to lay hold on Christ; they are taught "the truth as it is in Jesus;" that is, experimentally and savingly.

8. Little children do all for their parents, and acknowledge them in all they have; so the child of God does nothing for himself but for God's glory. Let me be for the Lord, says a gracious soul, I am content to be his, and acknowledge all I have is from God: "By the grace of God I am what I am;—I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the

grace of God which was with me," 1 Cor. xv. 10. If you ask a little child, "Who was it brought you over that dirty place?" He will say, "My father." "Who bought you those new clothes?" "Why my father;—my father does all for me." A child of God will give his heavenly Father all the glory: "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory," Psalm cxv. 1. "Who maketh thee to differ from another?" is it thyself? O no! I can do nothing of myself, it is God that does all: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," Eph. i. 3. All our care and concern in religion will come to nothing without God's help and grace: "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." Rom. xi. 36.

9. Converts resemble little children in their growth. The longer children live, the stronger they grow; so believers grow in grace: "Ye,shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall." Christians, are you not ashamed of yourselves that you are no taller, after so long standing, than you were the first year of your spiritual life? Shall we have ordinances and the various means of grace, and grow no better? "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day," Prov. iv. 18. If you grow not, perhaps it is because you are not a living member of Christ's body.

10. Little children are mostly of an humble and condescending disposition. "Whosoever shall humble himself," saith Christ, "as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven," Matt. xviii. 4. The child of a prince will play with the child of a peasant, and will not mind high things such as crowns and sceptres. Thus it is with the children of God, they are content with their stations, and can say, "My heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me," Psalm cxxxi. 1. A child of God will not make so much stir for the riches and honours of the world as other people; he is content with ordinary food and raiment: "Godliness with contentment is great gain:" and St. Paul says, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."—I have learned this lesson, that if God take all, I am content. A Christian will be of a condescending temper: he will "condescend to men of low estate," and "esteem other better than himself." He is not seeking after the dignities of this world, he is looking for a greater object, even the kingdom of heaven.

We now come to the use and application of our subject. If

converting grace makes persons become like little children, we may learn these four things:—

1. That the power of God is unlimited. He that can change man's nature, so that old sinners, who have lived so long in sin, should be born again; that they who have scorned the saints and counted them a company of fools, should be made like them, praying and regarding other spiritual duties more than others; that they who have formerly pursued the world with such eagerness, should now cast it at their heels, become meek and patient in spirit, and, it may be, outstrip others in holiness that set out long before them:—he that can produce such wonderful changes, must indeed be unlimited in power. The Almighty, by his grace, can of a grey-headed man raise up a son to call him blessed, nothing is impossible with him; he can renew the heart, unite the soul to himself, and cleanse it from the filthiness of sin: "Such were some of you," that is, as filthy and polluted sinners as those before-mentioned, "but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," 1 Cor. vi. 11.

2. We may learn, that the work of the ministry is very great. Nobody knows what we have to do, or the difficulty of that work in which we are engaged. A pious husband, that strives with an unconverted wife to do her soul good, may perceive something of the difficulty when he cannot by any means prevail. Gehazi, when sent to lay the prophet's staff upon the dead child's face, returned to his master, saying, "the child is not awakened:" so we go out and preach the word to poor, dead sinners, and are many times obliged to return to God and complain, "the child is not awaked," we can do no good, souls are not converted: but, however, God will pay the nurse though the child die, and if we are faithful to our work we shall not lose our reward, but receive it to the full another day: yet it is a great burden to labour for souls when they are not converted. You think it hard, when for preaching God's word we are imprisoned with thieves and rogues, as if we were not fit to go loose; but we have greater trials than these, when we labour to do good to souls, and see no good effects. You have great occasion to "pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified," 2 Thess. iii. 1.

3. If converting grace makes persons become like little children, then conversion is no half work. As a child has the same number of members as his father, so a child of God is renewed throughout, in body, soul, and spirit. A half persuasion to be good, God cannot abide; therefore, saith the apostle, "I pray

God sanctify you wholly." As the soul is in every part of the man, sees in the eye, hears in the ear, so converting grace changes the whole man. It makes a change not only in the mind, but also in the will and affections; it is not merely a moral change from profaneness to civility, or an external change to a form of godliness, but it changes men's dispositions and inclinations; "All things become new." Do you think heaven will be peopled with profane sinners, idle neglecters of duties, and vain talkers? O no! men must be fitted for heaven, or they will never arrive thither.

4. If true conversion makes men become like little children, "then there is reason to fear few people go to heaven." We may see young persons when they grow up a little, become proud and stubborn, and oftentimes the older they grow the worse; but Christ says, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Look to yourselves, for few find the way to heaven; because "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it," Matt. vii. 14. "The righteous scarcely are saved;" that is, with much difficulty, they endure many a bitter pang ere they come to heaven. Most men go in the broad road; they may easily go to hell; may sleep themselves there, and by forgetfulness of God and their souls may bring themselves to it; but the way to heaven is hard. You had need be jealous lest you should not be the Lord's. If times of calamity come, God will take care of his children, but he regards not others. If you profess to be Christians, and are not like God, he will not accept you, nor any thing you do, but will at last cast you into hell; if you resemble him, he will look after you and preserve you at all times, and in all conditions, so that persecutions shall not daunt nor hurt you. Examine, therefore, whether you be the children of God by conversion: for "except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

SERMON VI.

DELIVERANCE FROM THE WORLD.

GALATIANS I. 4.

Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.

ALL have but a time to live in this world, and when we have acted our part, must enter a state of happiness or woe to all eternity. Man being by nature in a sinful and miserable condition, by reason of the fall, is an enemy to God and holiness; but God hath given Christ, and Christ hath given himself to be our Saviour and Redeemer. There are several things from which Christ came to redeem us; from the wrath to come, the captivity of Satan, the curse of the law, the dominion of sin, the condemnation of sin, the sting of death, the fear of death, the legal and ceremonial law, and from this present evil world.

To explain the words of our text a little, we may notice, First, The meritorious cause of our deliverance,—the undertaking of Christ, "he gave himself for our sins—the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," and "he is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." Secondly, He redeems us from this present evil world. It is not evil of itself originally, but accidentally. It is an evil world, as it respects both sin and suffering. It is in this world all the sins of men are committed; and O how great and cursed are the sins here committed! On earth it is men's pleasure to sin, but in hell is their torment. There will be no meat nor drink, no houses nor lands, no silver nor gold to delight men; it will be the time of their sorrow and misery. In this evil world, believers themselves are often overcome and borne down by sin. The present world is also a state of suffering. It is the saint's purgatory; all their hell is in this world, and they may despair of finding true happiness here, for one trouble comes after another. Thirdly, It is called this present world; and it is well for good men it is only a present world. "I would not live always." While God is building his church, he keeps up the stage of this world, but when the number of his elect shall be finished, he will then

take it down ; it is but for a little while and the righteous shall be delivered, and have a joyful entrance into glory and happiness : it will be but a little longer, and the pleasures, profits, and honours of this world will be at an end.

The doctrine contained in the text is, that Christ himself, and Christ alone, doth deliver all his people, and only his, from this present evil world.

In the discussion of this doctrine, we shall endeavour to shew,

I. What this world is from which our Lord delivers his people? The world is sometimes taken for the whole frame of heaven and earth ; sometimes figuratively for the men of the world, either all mankind, or the unregenerate part of the world. By the world, sometimes, the things of the world are meant ; these may be either good or evil in their nature. Some of the things of the world are evil occasionally, as abused by men. Now Christians are delivered from all these, "they are crucified to the world," and the world to them. We shall inquire,

II. Who they are that are thus delivered? The apostle says, *us* ; this may signify the church and people of God collectively, that are called out of the world and set apart for God and his service. These are redeemed by Christ, he hath loved them and washed them from their sins in his own blood ; they shall abide through all ages in spite of all opposition and persecution. It may also refer to every particular person in the church of Christ, every true Christian, who shall be kept from this present evil world.

III. Let us shew, what it is in the world from which Christ delivers his people. 1. He delivers them from the state of the world. Every man and woman is born in a state of sin and misery, of wrath and condemnation ; "for the whole world lieth in wickedness," 1 John v. 19. The people of God have a new nature given them, and are not in the same condition as the world ; they who were afar off from God and holiness, are "made nigh by the blood of Christ ;" they are taken out of the devil's family and are "made fellow-citizens of the saints and of the household of God." "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk, not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them ; because of the blindness of their heart," Eph. iv. 17, 18. And again, "The scripture hath concluded all under sin," but when the promise by faith is given to them that believe, they all become "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," Gal. iii. 22, 26. Though the righteous may be chastened in this world for their offences, they shall not be condemned with the world ; for they are not of the world.

2. They are delivered from the snares of the world. The true Christian is, by converting grace brought out of the snare of the devil, who hath the wicked in chains and keeps them in his circuit. Believers are set at liberty and shall never be entangled as the wicked are; their eyes are opened to discover the snare in every thing; "Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird;" and "we know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not," 1 John v. 18; that is, not so as to get him within his dominion.

3. True Christians are delivered from the spirit of the world. The men of the world are of a base and low spirit, they are all for themselves; but the people of God are of a brave, noble disposition. "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour." "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy," James iii. 17. Being partakers of this wisdom they mind the things of God, and of Christ, and of the world to come; but the men of the world being influenced by the spirit of the world, seek those things which are "earthly, sensual, and devilish."

4. They are delivered from the course of this evil world. They formerly "walked according to the course of this world," and were like other folks; they could talk vainly and profanely, they could swear, lie, and act as others did; but now the case is altered, and men "think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you," 1 Peter iv. 4. Let me beseech you, "brethren, by the mercies of God —that ye be not conformed to this world; but be transformed by the renewing of your mind," Rom. xii. 1, 2. "Many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things," Phil. iii. 18, 19; that is, there are many among you, pretended Christians, that thus walk: "but our conversation is in heaven from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." Christians have a peculiar course contrary to that of the world.

IV. Let us consider, when Christians are delivered from this present evil world? 1. They may be said to be delivered from this present evil world at their conversion. The Spirit of God does then convince them of their sin and misery; that they are amongst the crowd of those that perish, and bids them save themselves from this untoward generation. It may be, poor graceless souls sit out many a strong conviction, but at last the word of the Lord comes with power, and they are

plucked as brands out of the fire; then the soul is ready to say, this world hath bewitched me. His former companions come and say, go with us; what, must all be lost but a few precise people? But they cannot prevail; for he thinks, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Matt. xvi. 26. He has now learned to say, with Asaph, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire beside thee," Psal. lxiii. 25. I will not be put off with the world, it is only a morsel, and will not be a satisfying portion for the soul. Having tasted the grace of God, and of Christ, and true religion, having once enjoyed this heavenly water, he will not thirst after worldly things, but pant for the living God.

2. We are delivered from this evil world, when we make progress in sanctification. The more a soul mounts heavenward, the less all other things appear. He thinks within himself, the world is not the New Jerusalem, nor worth taking any notice of. "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal," 2 Cor. iv. 18. The believing soul can say, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ: yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," Phil. iii. 7, 8. A Christian, as he grows in sanctification, becomes more indifferent to the world; he is willing to part with houses, and lands, and wife, and children, and even with his own life, for Christ's sake and the gospel's, if called to it; for he knows that his Lord and Saviour can be better to him than all these things. If even a prison be his lot, his soul can sing praises when God is with him, and he rises above the world.

3. A Christian is delivered from this present evil world, when he departs into the world of spirits. God will not suffer his people to be always tossed on the sea of life, but will in due time take them out of it, and their souls shall not see destruction; death sets the souls of God's people at liberty. God does not love to have his people long from him, therefore he sends death to fetch them home to himself; then they are delivered from all afflictions, temptations, and corruptions, and are conducted to that place, "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest," where the devil can never throw a dart at them more.

4. The righteous will be completely delivered from this present evil world, on the morning of the resurrection. At death, the body is left for a while in the grave; but at the last day,

the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall arise; the earth and the sea shall give up the dead that are in them, and the bodies of the saints shall then be glorified like the body of Jesus Christ. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord," 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17. The devil shall then be quite cast out and reign no more; for Christ "must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." Job saith, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God," Job xix. 25, 26. We leave the bodies of our pious friends in the grave, but they shall rise again; they will be "accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead," where they "neither marry nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection," Luke xx. 35, 36.

V. Let us proceed to notice what Christ has done, whereby his people are delivered from this present evil world? He has delivered them,

1. By his meritorious life and death. "He who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich." He might have come in power, pomp, and glory; but he choose to come in a poor, mean, and despised condition. Why therefore should we make account of these things which he cast at his feet? Christ is now become our atonement; the bonds are cancelled between the world and us; he hath set us at liberty, and we are now dead to the world and married to Christ; so also let your affections and thoughts be.

2. Christ hath delivered us by his victorious resurrection and ascension. By rising again from the dead, raising the spirits of his people above the world, and his ascension on high, the souls of believers are advanced to sit with Christ "in heavenly places," and thereby become heavenly-minded. Christ is gone into heaven and has taken possession for his saints.

3. He delivers his people by his prevailing intercession for them. "I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me," John xvii. 9. When on earth, he prayed for their deliverance from the evil in the world, and that they might be with him where he is, to behold his glory. Now he is in heaven, he takes care of them; he is

"a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted," Heb. ii. 17, 18. Such is his concern for them, "that he will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able to bear, but will with the temptation make a way to escape."

4. His people are delivered from this present evil world, by the Holy Spirit's efficacious working. The Spirit convinces the soul, that all the favours of the world are of no value; that its threatenings are not to be dreaded, nay, that we should "glory in tribulation." Assisted by the Spirit, his people can trample on worldly things; they are of a different spirit from the men of the world, they are not busied about trifles, but are "in the Spirit on the Lord's day."

VI. We shall mention the reasons, why our Lord delivers his people from this present evil world?

1. Because none else can. The redemption of the soul is precious, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot," 1 Pet. i 18, 19. 2. Christ delivers his people from this present evil world, because there is no proportion between a soul and the whole world; it is not all worth one soul, neither can it satisfy the immortal part. 3. Christ was purposely fitted for this work. He was both God and man, and therefore is "able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him; seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them," Heb. vii. 25. 4. It is one principal part of his undertaking, that he should deliver his people from this present evil world. Let us now inquire,

VII. Why Christ delivers *his*, and only his? 1. Because those, and those only, were given him by the Father: "Ye believe not," saith Christ, "because ye are not of my sheep:— all that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out," John. x. 26. & vi. 37. 2. These and only these, are partakers of the glorious privileges of the gospel: "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him," John xiv. 23. These people are a chosen generation. 3. They are redeemed by Christ to bring forth different fruits from those produced by the world: he "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Titus ii. 14. 4. Christ hath prepared a king-

dom of glory, for those who are not of this world, and prepares them for that state: "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son," Col. i. 12, 13. Let us shew,

VIII. How it can be said God's people are *already* delivered from this present evil world? We answer, because the price is already paid. They may be said to be delivered, because the ransom is laid down for their freedom. They have also the promise of deliverance while in the world, and at last deliverance from it. They may be said to have the first-fruits of it, being sealed by the Holy Spirit, which is the earnest of their inheritance. They already experience less deliverances, which are the pledges of further and greater. We shall now proceed to the application.

This doctrine may be useful by way of information.

1. If Christ delivers his, and only his, then learn that Christians are very highly favoured: they are not like other men, who are of this world, but are from above. The Christian's relations are above; his father, who is the Lord Jehovah; his elder brother, the Lord Jesus Christ; his mother, which is the church; his kindred, which are the angels and glorified spirits —are all above. Christians are kings in disguise, they are not known in this world, they have a prepared kingdom, and now and then they have secret intercourse with the God of that state. This doctrine may inform us,

2. Why the people of God are hated, despised, and persecuted in this world. It is because they are not of it, but chosen out of it; therefore carnal men are ready to say of a Christian, "Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live," Acts xxii. 22. It is said in Heb. xi. 38, concerning the people of God, that they are they "of whom the world was not worthy;" and yet "they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." If then you desire to be different in sentiment and practice from the men of this world, you must expect tribulation here.

3. We may learn, that the Christian's religion is not suited to the world's interests. "My kingdom," saith Christ, "is not of this world:"—it is a spiritual kingdom, which he sets up in the hearts of his people; "the kingdom of God is within you."

4. We are taught by this doctrine, that the world is not so excellent a thing as men are apt to esteem it. Christ redeems his people out of it; and all its enjoyments, which men so eagerly pursue, are only vanity and vexation of spirit. What

ail men that they are so concerned about what cannot satisfy, but so indifferent to spiritual things which are far better? God gives the earth to the children of men, but reserves better things for his people: "Man walketh in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them," Psalm xxxix. 6. "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition," 1 Tim. vi. 9.

We may make use of this doctrine, by way of conviction to the carnal world If Christ delivers his, and only his, then what will become of you that have your portion in this world, that are wise only for time, that have the world in your mind the last at night and first in the morning, and thus shew it is the chief thing you seek? Now consider,

1. Does not the world stifle the convictions of God's word many times? Do not the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the good seed of the word so that it becomes unfruitful? Men lose their convictions, and deface the impressions of the Spirit of God, which they had under the ministry of the word, by their business and worldly concerns. One says, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it." Another says, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them." Another replies, "I have married a wife, and therefore cannot come." Thus this present evil world is doted upon by carnal men, to the loss of the soul. Consider,

2. Does not the world forbid the banns of marriage between the soul and Christ? Does it not break the treaty, and tell you it is too dear a bargain to forsake all for his sake? Many will follow Christ and religion in the time of prosperity, but when Christ and the world part, and his followers are exposed to persecution, they show which side they love most.

3. Does not the world distract and hinder men in the service and worship of God? Though you draw nigh to God in ordinances with your bodies and lips, are not your hearts going after covetousness? One is thinking of yesterday's business, and another of what he is to do to-morrow. Worldly affairs must be attended to, but let it be at proper times, and mind that first which is of most importance. Consider,

4. Can you take content in the world? If so, you are not of God. When your outward comforts abound, you may be ready to say, with the rich man in the gospel, "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;" then it proves, you "are adulterers and adultresses: for know ye not that the friendship of the

world is enmity with God?" The world will fail you in your greatest need, and what will you do with all your riches in the hour of death, when your soul must be separated from your body? Yet you venture to swim over the sea of God's wrath for this world, which, after all, proves but like a mouthful of water that cannot satisfy your thirst. Fools that men are, to venture on eternal misery for a little pleasure!

Let us use this doctrine by way of trial. God hath "set apart him that is godly for himself."

1. The main care of those who are delivered from this present evil world is, to please God and serve him. They take no thought what they shall eat, or what they shall drink, or wherewithal they shall be clothed; but seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, knowing that all these things shall be added unto them. "Cast your care upon God, for he careth for you."

2. They are delivered from the fear of the world. A Christian does not fear the men of the world, neither is he afraid of losing the world; but can say, if God call for it, let it go. "Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread," Isa. viii. 13. Mind your souls and serve God, then fear not the world.

3. They are delivered from the love of the world. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," 1 John ii. 15. Inquire, is your love set on the world above? Are you troubled that you lose the favour of this world? Do you delight most in the company of God? To conclude, try yourselves by these things. (1.) Do you like the world so as to forego heaven for it; and would you prefer prosperous profaneness before persecuted godliness? (2.) Are you weaned from the world and weary of it? (3.) Is there any thing that pleases you in the world, except what drops from heaven, and comes as a love-token from your heavenly Father? If you are delivered from this present evil world, you will pity those who have their portion here, and prize communion with God above all other enjoyments. (4.) When worldly thoughts disturb you in religious duties, is it a great burden to you? If you are delivered from the world, then, when your hands are in the world, you will labour to have your heart in heaven. Amen.

SERMON VII.*

A STIMULUS TO DUTY.

HEB. x. 25.

And so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

THE text is an argument to press us to four duties, set down in the foregoing verses. First, to "draw near with a true heart." &c. Nearness to God is a Christian's happiness; but distance from him, the misery of the lost, who are to be "banished from the presence of the Lord." It is good being near to God, both as it respects state and duty; but our care in drawing near to God must be, to see it is with "a true heart;" for God cannot endure a false one. We should also see that we draw near to him in "faith;" for faith unites the soul to God, and the "full assurance of faith" renders it comfortable. It must also be, with "hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience;" for God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. And it must be, with "bodies washed with pure water;" not only with the water of baptism, but a holy conversation. Thus we must study to approach God, because he will approach us ere long to judgment. The second duty is expressed in these words, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering," ver. 23. Here we are exhorted to be sure and "hold fast" our faith; by no means to make "shipwreck of faith and a good conscience." We must also maintain "the profession of our faith." We must not think of keeping religion to ourselves, but own Christ in an evil day and amongst an evil generation, or he will disown us. The third duty is contained in ver. 24; "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works;" let us not carp at one another, but provoke to love, to love God and each other, and to maintain good works. Let each one strive to go before another in these commendable duties, to quicken one another, "and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." The fourth duty is, "not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together," ver. 25. That is, not scattering one sheep from another, for then you will be the sooner destroyed; but joining together in the work and worship of God, "and so much the more" earnestly and sincerely as ye

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see, by the signs of providence, we are drawing near to the day of Christ.

Doctrine. That the due sight and sense of the approaching of the day of the Lord, should be a spur to quicken us to our duty.

In the consideration of this truth we shall,

I. Show what that day is which is here spoken of. There are four remarkable days mentioned in scripture, and of which we should take notice.

1. The day of grace. It is called a day by way of eminence, and may be considered either as to the rising or setting of the gospel sun.

(1.) As it respects the rising of the gospel sun. When persons have been in ignorance and darkness, and the sun of the gospel appears, it is time for men to bestir themselves; "It is now high time to awake out of sleep; the night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light," Rom. xiii. 11, 12. You have had a day of light and gospel grace; for shame! get you out of the bed of sloth and security, and set yourselves to the work of God in good earnest; "Let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober; for they that sleep, sleep in the night," 1 Thess. v. 6, 7. It is very unbecoming persons professing the name of God to be secure and sinful; "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent," Acts xvii. 30. Betake yourselves to work while the day of grace continues, lest you miss the benefit of it, which will be a dreadful loss. Hast thou been twenty, or thirty years, under the means of grace and no better for it? God may justly let thee alone in darkness, and never suffer the light of conviction to dart on thee any more; and then, how sad will thy case be!

(2). Consider the day of grace in reference to the setting of the gospel sun. How ought we to be quickened to our duty at such a time! There are as great signs of a gospel eclipse now as ever. Good ministers die, others are in danger of banishment and imprisonment, and perhaps you may never have a call at your door any more; then so much the more as you see this day approaching you should be quickened to your duty; "Yet a little while is the light with you; walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you," John xii. 35. Little do you know how soon the sun of the gospel may set, and God may snatch his ordinances from you, take the kingdom of God from you, and give it to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. The gospel does not tarry long in one place, and if it leave you, it will leave you in worse darkness than ever. Do you think that if a man come to a town or market,

and the men of the place will neither buy any of his precious wares, nor let him alone, but throw stones at him—do you think, he will stay amongst them? So if we will ill-treat God's ministers, persecute those ambassadors of peace, and are generally unprofitable under ordinances, is God likely to continue with us? Will he not pack up and be gone? It is said of Christ concerning Jerusalem, "When he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes," Luke xix. 41, 42. God is threatening to depart from us, then so much the more be quickened to your duty, "As ye see the day approaching." The scriptures mention,

2. A day of vengeance. If the day of gospel light and grace be not improved, it will be followed by a day of vengeance. If "the acceptable year of the Lord" be not regarded, it will be followed by the "day of vengeance of our God," Isa. lxi. 2. When Christ was foretelling the punishment about to be brought on the Jews, for rejecting the gospel, he says, "These be the days of vengeance." "Thus saith the Lord God unto the land of Israel, an end, the end is come upon the four corners of the land; now is the end come upon thee, and I will send mine anger upon thee," Ezek. vii. 2, 3. A day of trouble is coming upon us, after what manner it will be I cannot tell; but the nearer it approaches, the more should we be quickened in our duties. "Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud, for the Lord hath spoken: give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness; but if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride," Jer. xiii. 15—17. How often have ministers warned people to return to God and confess their sins, but they say, "We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement." One thinks to save himself by his riches, and another by turning, but God saith, "The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place; and your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand, when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it," Isa. xxviii. 17, 18. The only way is to get into your chambers, draw near to God, "and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." Those who trust and fear the Lord, will be safe under his protection, and there only, when the storm cometh. The scriptures tell us,

3. Of the day of death. This will be either the best or

worst day we ever had; "The day of one's death is better," says Solomon, "than the day of one's birth." It is so to the pious man; for then he takes leave of all sins, sorrows, and temptations, and that for ever. He then enters into the presence of God to enjoy him and all good perpetually; but a graceless soul goes from misery to misery, from a state of sin, to a place of suffering for evermore. This day is hastening upon every wicked man, however he may brag and boast of his riches, "The Lord shall laugh at him, for he seeth that his day is coming." You have seen some of your acquaintance in your assemblies and markets one day, and on the next, laid on a bed of sickness, and soon in the grave, This should remind you of your own death which is approaching; every grey hair on your head, and every stitch of pain in your body, should put you in mind that your day is approaching. The apostle could say, "I die daily;" but alas! most men put far from them the evil day. Few have present apprehensions of death, or regard due preparations for it; yet die you must; and if even you were to live twenty or thirty years, but still be unprepared for death, you will be more unfit for it then, than now. "If a man die, shall he live again?" says Job. Will life come again after death to mend matters? The Jewish Rabbi said to the man that asked him when he should repent, "Why, the day before you die." You know not but you may die to-morrow, therefore repentance should be the work of this day; for if you be found in your sins you are sure to perish; therefore "so much the more as you see the day" of death approaching, be concerned to be prepared for it, and consider every day of your life is a day taken from it.

4. The scriptures remind us of the day of judgment. This day approaches and draws near. The day hastens wherein Antichrist shall be destroyed, the Jews called, and the fulness of the Gentiles brought in; and we know not how soon the day of judgment will succeed. The heavens will then flame over us, the graves be opened, and Christ come with the sound of a trumpet, in great power and glory to judge the world: this day will come, for "he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness," but it is unknown to any except God. It is called the last day, the great and notable day, &c. the day of Christ. Such a day is coming in which all your thoughts, words, and actions will be examined, and you must give an account before God; therefore, as this day approaches, be careful that things are in readiness, and consider when death comes, then your particular judgment will take place; your soul will then go to God that gave it, to receive a sentence of absolution or condemnation. Let us,

II. Show what those duties are, to which our attention is called by these approaching days.

1. Be sure that you have evidence of your conversion to God. Union to Christ, and faith in him, will alone stand when the days we have mentioned approach. No privileges nor gifts will avail us in the great day of judgment; if we have wrought miracles in the name of Christ, but are not converted to him, he will say to us, "I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity." The day is coming that will discover what you are; you will carry nothing but grace or guilt with you out of this world. If we should then be found out of Christ, not all the angels in heaven, and saints on earth can save us; for God hath said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," Matt. xviii. 3. The scriptures inform us, that Christ will come in "flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus," 2 Thess. i. 8. "Wherefore, beloved, seeing ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless," 2 Pet. iii. 14. Think not to climb up to heaven by any other way than the way of holiness. Plead with God for converting grace, and say, "Lord, turn me and I shall be turned; let me not be condemned with cursers and swearers, and profane sinners. Christ will not plead the cause of that man who has not retained him as an advocate. See then that you are Christians indeed, for to appear before the tribunal of God without a work of grace in the heart will be very terrible.

2. As the great day of judgment approaches, endeavour to obtain assurance of a real change of heart. How dare you go with uncertainties before the tribunal of heaven? If you can rest satisfied when you have no solid evidence of a work of grace in the heart, I fear you have none. There is a degree of assurance to be had, such as the assurance of the understanding, the assurance of faith, the assurance of hope; be not content without this assurance. How comfortable will it be for the soul at Christ's coming to say, Lo! yonder is my Lord and Saviour, whom I love with all my heart, in whom I have hoped, trusted, and believed. The Psalmist could say, "Our God shall come;" so a gracious soul may say, my God is coming; but if you have no hope that God is your God, you have cause to fear. True sincerity hath safety, but assurance hath boldness in meeting the Lord.

3. As the day is approaching, be sincere in all your graces and actions. That day is coming which will declare what kind of work yours is; "Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed

by fire," 1 Cor. iii. 13. It will then appear whether your faith be unfeigned, your love sincere, and all your graces of the right stamp. You cannot cheat God; for he "will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts," 1 Cor. iv. 5. Approve your hearts to God; for "a hypocrite cannot stand before him." Do all in sincerity; for what does it signify to have a name to live and be dead, to have lamps of profession, but want the oil of grace? As you love God and your own souls be sincere; pray with sincerity, confess your sins with sincerity, and repent of sin with sincerity; "and so much the more as ye see the day approaching."

4. Mortify your lusts. It is equally dangerous to have a lust in our heart, as a lie in our right hand. If you allow any lust in your soul, Christ will send you to the place of torment. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth," Col. iii. 4, 5. Cut off right hand sins, and pluck out right eye lusts; for it is better to be welcomed by Christ into heaven maimed, or having one eye, than to be cast into hell having both hands and eyes. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure," 1 John iii. 2, 3. Hence learn, you must be Puritans, if you would go to heaven: therefore be serious in the mortification of your sins, and hold no correspondence with any lusts, for they are Christ's enemies. If any of your souls be found embracing those lusts which wounded Christ, how sad will your case be!

5. As this day approaches, so much the more should you be careful to have your hearts withdrawn from the world. What an insignificant thing will this world appear, when Christ comes to judgment! Then all this world's goods, for which men have laboured so earnestly, will be consumed with fire. Strive to get above the world, for the higher you ascend towards God and Christ, the more will the world dwindle in your affection: "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Matt. xvi. 26. When the "Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; then he shall reward every man according to his works;" not according to his silver and gold. O sirs! "The time is short; it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this

world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away," 1 Cor. vii. 29—31. If you be Christians, then live as such, and say as Paul, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world:" the world cares nothing for me, nor I for it.

6. Endeavour to be valiant in your actings for God, in the way of duty, notwithstanding the difficulties you may meet with. Thus St. Paul exclaims, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy."—"I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus," Acts xx. 24, and xxi. 13. O blessed, heroic spirit! The apostle James says, "Be ye also patient, establish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh," James v. 8. Be resolute in the work of God, and fear not men; they are not to be masters of your conscience now, because they are not to be your judges hereafter. God's will must be your rule, act in reverence to him in all you do, and seeing the Lord is coming, "by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality," Rom. ii. 7.

7. As the day approaches wherein the Lord will come to judge the world, meet him by the actings of faith and love. Faith beholds him that is invisible, sees Christ coming in the clouds to judgment, and excites love to him; "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory," 1 Pet. i. 8. Labour to live more by faith in Christ, and "to love his appearing."—"The just shall live by faith," and can say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day," 2 Tim. i. 12.

8. As the day of the Lord approaches, seek after progress in sanctification and grace. This was the desire of the apostle Paul, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead;" that is, I desire by any means, whether ordinances or providences, to possess so much holiness as I must have at the resurrection of the dead. I wish to grow every day better, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after;—I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark," Phil. iii. 11—14.

9. Be careful to improve your talents and prepare your accounts, and so much the more as the reckoning "day approaches." We all have our talents, and Christ saith, "Occupy

till I come." To one, he has given health and strength; to another, wealth and estate; to another, wit and knowledge; to another, ordinances and means of grace: these are to be improved for the good of our own souls and those of others. He will soon say, "Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward," Luke xvi. 2. How will you give your account of all the sermons you have heard, and the various talents you have enjoyed? It is said, "every one of us shall give account of himself to God," and "every man shall bear his own burden." Be serious therefore in making up your accounts. When at the Lord's supper remember, this ordinance shows the Lord will come, and that you should be prepared.

10 As the day approaches, so much the more do you stand upon your watch. "Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come," Matt. xxiv. 42. "The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer," 1 Pet. iv. 7. Suppose the heavens were all on flame, the graves opening, the earth trembling, and Christ coming to judgment, would you not then fall a praying? Do it now then, before it be too late. Watch against the world, the flesh, and the devil, lest you be deceived and ruined by them.

11. Maintain christian communion one with another. "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together," through worldly business, fear of scorn, or contempt from men. You would not be thought Puritans, and through fear of persecution would be careless of these duties, but forsake them not whatever you may suffer here. Christ is coming and will repay; he will not let you lose any thing by what you are called to endure, especially when labouring to do good to men's souls.

Finally, Deny yourselves, and act faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Were you to do all that is required of you, you are but "unprofitable servants, and have done that which was your duty to do." All our righteousness is but as dung, and dross, and filthy rags; and our iniquities like the wind would take us away. We should say with Paul, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith," Phil. iii. 8, 9. I am conscious, saith a gracious soul, that I have missed it in every thing; that I must put on the garment of Christ's righteousness; for it must appear for me at the tribunal of God, or I cannot be justified. Let it be your prayer then, that Christ may be to you, "wisdom, and

righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" And again, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight, shall no man living be justified." We can be justified only by faith in Christ Jesus: therefore let us get out of ourselves and rely wholly upon Christ. It is true we must be judged according to our works; but are not accepted with God or saved for our works. When we have done all, we must deny ourselves, and act faith on our Lord Jesus Christ. If we have been quickened and enlarged in any duty, we must be thankful and bless God; though we must not trust in it, but in Christ Jesus our Lord.

SERMON VIII.*

BELIEVERS SAFE AND COMFORTABLE.

JOB XIX. 25—27.

I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me.

IT was the desire of our loving neighbour and dear brother, Mr. Eaton, whose wearisome pilgrimage God hath graciously finished, that he might be buried amongst us, and that I would preach a sermon to the living: this his desire he expressed to me some years ago, but did not mention any particular portion of scripture which was in his thoughts as the subject of the sermon requested. I understand that he continued in this desire to his

* This sermon was preached on the death of the Rev. Samuel Eaton, and is extracted from Dr. Rippon's Baptist Annual Register, vol. iv. page 559. Mr. Eaton was a Nonconformist Minister, ejected from Dukinfield, in Cheshire. "He was," says the Nonconformist Memorial, "a very holy man, a person of great learning and judgment, and an incomparable preacher." The following memorandum is prefixed to the sermon—"Denton, Jan. 22, 1694. Upon occasion of the death of Mr. Samuel Eaton, who died Jan. the 9th, and was buried Jan. the 12th; he desired this office of love from me, and appointed this text." The Nonconformist Memorial mentions Dukinfield as being in Lancashire, and Mr. Eaton as having died in 1664.

dying day, and of late singled out, and mentioned these memorable words of Job; those words which Job, in the midst of his affliction, so earnestly desired might be transmitted to posterity, that they might be written, and graven with a pen and lead in a rock, that they might abide for ever; in which he doth fully clear his own uprightness, and has left a legacy to the church. This portion of scripture he fitly pitched upon as a believer, one that had drank of Job's cup of affliction and consolation. He drank in large measure of Job's cup of affliction: he was much afflicted in his estate in the time of the former bishops; he was so afflicted in his body, liberty, friends, good name, oft times and many ways troubled and grieved in his spirit. Among his many afflictions, I observed that two especially affected his spirits.

One, the great wrong that was done him in his good name, not by enemies but friends; he might truly say with Job, verse 19 of this chapter, "They whom I loved are turned against me;" and with the best of men, and our Saviour, "False witnesses did rise up, they laid to my charge things that I knew not," Psalm xxxv. 11.

The other was the loss of his speech, whereby he was unfitted to serve God and his church as formerly; yet when the Lord had humbled him and proved him, he cleared his innocency, and restored to him some measure of usefulness. Blessed be his name, he drunk of Job's cup of consolation, he had the testimony of his conscience on his side, when he was afflicted, and accused, and reproached; he knew the grounds of his comfort, and had grace given him to apply the same, and therewith to comfort himself, as Job did, in the midst of, and above all his afflictions, as appears in the most full and comfortable profession of his faith: he did fitly pitch upon this portion of scripture to be spoken of to the church after his decease. If we consider him as a minister of the gospel, hereby he took a course that the church might be put in mind of the doctrine he preached, which he believed, professed, lived and died in, that they might be encouraged in their faith, profession, and practice of it. There are several articles of our faith included in these words, which I cannot speak of particularly in a sermon; but that which I shall propose in the general, is, to explain two main things held out in these verses.

I. Job's safe state in the midst of his afflictions.

II. His comfortable state amidst his sorrows and vexations of spirit.

1. Job's state was safe for the present, notwithstanding his sins; he was afflicted in his estate, friends, body, name; yet a safe man, for he had a Redeemer, a kinsman, an elder brother, the Lord Jesus Christ, who had right and power to redeem him

from sin and affliction, Psalm cxxx. 7; therefore he shall be saved. See Job xiii. 15, 16.

2. His safe state for after time; his Redeemer liveth as God, in his essence, God blessed for ever; and as man, though he died, yet he rose again, and dieth no more, Rev. i. 18, therefore he is ever a Redeemer to him.

(1.) He would be safe though death should separate soul and body, and he could live no longer than his appointed time on earth, to behold men and worship God, yet his Redeemer liveth, death could not separate him from the love of Christ, Rom. viii. 38; it could not dissolve this union; Christ would take care that his soul should enter into peace, and his body rest in the most soft, sweet, and safe bed of the grave. Isa. lvii. 1, 2.

(2.) He is safe in the grave; his Redeemer liveth to preserve the precious dust of his body, that none of it be lost. Not the least particle of the dust of his redeemed, sanctified body, (a member of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Ghost) shall be lost. 1 Cor. vi. 19.

(3.) He will be safe at the resurrection; his Redeemer liveth to raise his body out of the dust, to unite it to his own soul, and make it like to his glorious body. John vi. 39. Phil. iii. 21.

(4.) He will be safe in the day of judgment, safe from condemnation; his Redeemer liveth, he shall be his Judge, as God hath appointed. Acts x. 36, 42.

II. As his safe state in all his afflictions is here manifest, so his comfortable state in all his sorrows; for he knew by faith,

1. That he had a living Redeemer; he did not only know by a historical faith that there was a Messiah, (a promised seed, in whom all nations were to be blessed, typified in sacrifices, promised to Adam and Abraham, Gal. iii. 7, 8.) but he knew by a justifying faith that he was his Redeemer. As Abraham believed, Gen. xv. 6. Job believed the same promise, Job xiii. 18, his conscience told him he had accepted Christ for his Redeemer, and trusted in him, though he should slay him, ver. 15, and he knew it was sincere trust, not presumption, by the uprightness of his heart, *v.* 15, 16, and by the effects of it, as, (1.) It worked by love; he served God for love, and not for wages. (2.) It purified his heart, and cleansed his way, Job iii. 4; he feared God, eschewed evil. (3.) It made him the pattern of patience. (4.) It strengthened him in temptations from Satan, the world, friends; so that he kept the way of God, and was not discouraged, but held on till God finished his temptations.—Though he himself was in a dying condition, and did expect death daily, yet his comfort was, that his Redeemer did live, and should live for ever.

2. He knew by faith that his Redeemer should stand in the

latter days upon the earth; in the days of the gospel, he should assume the nature of man, and live upon the earth, that he might obey and suffer, die and rise again, and ascend to heaven for his redemption; and at the last day he should come from heaven to judgment, when he should be justly judged, and cleared, though he was now unjustly accused, and judged to be a hypocrite, a deceiver, a wicked man, and so afflicted by God. This last judgment was prophesied of by Enoch, before Christ's time, Jude, 14, 15. Abraham also believed God to be the Judge of all the world, Gen. xviii. 25, even God the Son, who appeared to him and others in a human shape, as a forerunner of his incarnation. This was Job's comfort, that after all misjudgings and censurings were past, there should be a last judgment, and all by his Redeemer.

3. He knew by faith, that though his body at present was much worn and wasted with affliction, and nothing left but skin and bone, though after death his body should be wholly consumed within and without, yet he should be restored; his skin, flesh, bones, eyes, the self-same body that had so suffered, laid in the grave, consumed, though erelong he should be seen, censured no more, yet, when Christ comes, he should appear with him in a glorious body, in perfect health, strength, and beauty; this corruption will put on incorruption. Col. iii. 4.

4. He knew by faith, that in his body, restored and glorified, he should see his Redeemer's glorified body, even with those eyes that had seen so much affliction. What a glorious, transporting sight will that be! to see the body of his Redeemer, which suffered so much, so painful a death for him; and that with the eyes of his understanding he should see God, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost: he shall see him face to face, know him as he is known, have perfect knowledge of him. 1 Cor. xiii. 12. "Be blessed, and be like him," Matt. v. 8. 1 John iii. 2.

Job was confirmed in his faith by God's translating Enoch, Gen. v. 24, and by God's preparing an ark, and shutting up Noah in it, a figure of the eternal salvation of believers signified and sealed by baptism, 1 Pet. iii. 21. This most comfortable truth of seeing God in glory, and enjoying him, the saints of old were acquainted with; the patriarchs were pilgrims here, and sought a heavenly country, Heb. xi. 9, 10, 14. Moses desired by faith to see God's glory, Exod. xxxiii.18; but God told him, that mercy was reserved for another life.

David, Psalm xv. and xxiv. describeth the man that shall ascend into God's hill, read also Ps. xvi. and xvii. This is the completion of our happiness. 1 Thess. iv. 17.

Application.—We have seen the safety and comfortableness

of Job's state, in the midst of his afflictions and sorrows, clearly deduced from these verses, in which he makes a confession of his faith, which is also a profession of his integrity, and an encouragement against the false judging of his friends. Our dear brother deceased made the same profession of the same faith, in his afflictions, and desired it might be made known to the church after his decease, and by it he being dead, yet speaketh, with believing Abel, to his neighbours, friends, all in civil and spiritual relation to him, in this manner :—

1. I leave you in this my last sermon, for a memorial, the sum of that doctrine I have been taught in the church of God, have believed, professed, practised, and many years preached to you, in which I have lived and died, that ye may remember it, hold it fast, live and die in it: some articles of it are these following: (1.) That all men, even the best of men, are sinful and miserable, and cannot redeem themselves, but need a Redeemer. (2.) That God, passing by fallen angels, hath provided a Redeemer for mankind, his own Son, God and man, one that is willing, for he is a Redeemer in name and office; able also, a living Redeemer, life itself, able to overcome death and bestow happiness. (3.) This Redeemer is not for all men, but for particular persons, such as have grace given them to believe, to accept of Christ, and appropriate him, conscious that they need a Redeemer. (4.) That particular believers may, in the use of God's means, in an ordinary way, attain to assurance that Christ is their Redeemer, not only to a good hope, but certainty of faith.— (5.) That though the redeemed die, yet they do not perish; there is a resurrection; the same bodies which they lay down shall rise again. (6.) That Christ, the Redeemer of his people, shall come at last to judge the world. (7.) That after the resurrection, and day of judgment, the redeemed shall have a glorious and blessed sight of their Redeemer, both in body and soul.

2. You have been all baptized into this one faith; you have been taught it, have embraced it, professed it; you all agree in the substantial and saving doctrines of faith, having been partakers of the holy supper, whereby you have been confirmed in faith; see that you live in love, that you bear one another's burdens and infirmities, and fulfil the law of Christ.

3. I have gone before you in a way of patience as well as of obedience; my afflictions, with holy Job, have been many and great, some of long continuance. I have been afflicted in my estate, body, spirit, friends, name; that which hath been my support and comfort in all my afflictions, is faith in a Redeemer, that my sins are forgiven through his blood, that he hath redeemed me from the evil of all afflictions; that by him I shall be redeemed out of all sin and misery, from death and the

grave; and he will not leave me till he bring me to the blessed sight of God in glory: and this faith will be your comfort in like afflictions.

4. I have, as you know, been dying many years, and, at my appointed time, departed from among you, as well as others. I, your neighbour, friend, pastor, can speak no more to you, can pray no more for you, can converse no more with you, can walk no more amongst you; but my Redeemer and your Redeemer liveth, to do all these offices of love for you; he liveth to bring to your remembrance my doctrine, examples, counsels, admonitions; to bless the word I have preached to you, to answer the prayers I have put up to God for you; he will raise up living instruments for your instruction, support, and comfort; his Spirit liveth to be an instructor and comforter; the word liveth to be the food of your spiritual life; there shall be living ordinances, living and life-cherishing societies of redeemed ones, with which, if you hold communion, both in public and private, you shall find your spiritual life maintained and increased.

5. I die in an evil time, and leave you and the church of God in great and general affliction—I, by the goodness of God, notwithstanding all my enemies, die in my own house and bed, and come to my grave in peace, according to my heart's desire. I have lived to see evils come upon the church I expected not: but what you may live to see, I know not. You may drink deeper of the cup of affliction than I have done. Be of good comfort; I leave you this living comfort—your Redeemer liveth, and will redeem you out of all, as he hath done me.—He gives life and being to all afflictions, and instruments of them, even the greatest, and takes it away at his pleasure. He outlives them all; "and because he lives, ye shall live also," and outlive them, John xiv. 19.

6. Some of you, to whom I have preached, and with whom I have walked, have greatly distressed my heart, with your errors in doctrine, and disorderly walking, your scandals and divisions. Some of you have returned me evil for good, and hatred for my good will; have filled me with reproaches; some of you have remained under censures, and have not repented.—These things have grieved me, and sent me often to heaven with a sad heart; even to my living Redeemer, that he would redeem you from sin, and me from sorrow. It may be, when I am at rest in my grave, and turned to dust, you may remember these things, and be grieved for your sins against God, and wrongs done to me. If you repent, and believe in your Redeemer, whom I have preached to you, and to whom I have poured out my grieved heart, he will redeem you from all your sins, and from the harm of all the smarting afflictions you may meet with, and

I shall give up my accounts concerning you with joy. But be sure, I say be sure of this, that you do not meet me before the living Redeemer at the last day, in a state of impenitency: how sad, O how sad will it be, if my merciful Redeemer be your severe judge!

2. We may collect hence, from Job's confession of faith, and the safety and comfortableness of his state, included therein, the great loss sustained when those die who are like Job, eminent in station and grace, who have such faith in Christ, and upon just occasions profess it: for, (1.) They do greatly honour God in the world; what an honour was this to God, that in a time of hardest trials, when Satan was let loose upon Job, and he was under all sorts of affliction, when God dealt with him as an enemy, and all his comforters judged him to be a hypocrite in religion, and a notorious sinner, that then he should believe God to be his Redeemer, comfort himself in him, boldly profess his faith in him, and not be drawn to speak evil of him, or decline his way, but should keep his hold of God though beaten off.

(2.) They have interest in Christ as a Redeemer, therefore he hath a special care of them in evil times; there is more hope, therefore, in dangerous times, sinful times, while they are living; God hath respect to their persons, prayers, presence; in any place we know not of what use one of them may be, to continue mercies, keep off evils: much more many; the hope is less, and danger is greater when they are removed.

(3.) They are understanding and knowing persons, conversant with the mysteries of religion, able to instruct others concerning Christ the Redeemer, his divine and human nature, concerning the resurrection, day of judgment, vision of God in glory; there is a loss of spiritual instructors, and the greater loss of these that have been authorized by God and richly qualified for the work.

(4.) Having access to the sources of consolation they are enabled by grace to comfort themselves and others, in many, and great afflictions; they are acquainted with God's promises of comfort, they have had experience of the power of them in their own souls, and can comfort others from their own experience of the power of them in themselves; there is a loss of comforters.

Let us all be stirred up after the example of holy Job, to give diligence to attain the assurance of faith, that we may be able to say, particularly, My Redeemer liveth. We are sure of sin, guilt, and affliction more or less; of death and judgment, and shall we not get assurance of a Redeemer? give diligence for assurance, take a right course: 1. Be convinced of your sin and misery that you need a Redeemer. 2. Labour to know this Redeemer God hath provided, in his person, nature, offices.—

3. Consider and meditate upon the general offer of the gospel; Christ is willing to be thy Redeemer, he offers himself to thee, if thou wilt accept of him. 4. Accept him therefore, be willing he should redeem thee from the law of sin, service of it, guilt and condemnation of it. 5. Pray earnestly for assurance; search thyself narrowly, whether thou hast not accepted of Christ. Where Christ is a Redeemer, the effects of his redemption will appear; for instance, 1. Thou wilt love Christ as a Redeemer, thy soul will be endeared to him; heretofore thou lovedst sin, now Christ that loved thee and gave himself for thee. 2. Thou praisest Christ as a Redeemer, art greatly thankful to him, Oh! what a kindness hath he done thee; what a tyrant was sin, a slave thou wast to it. 3. Thou dost earnestly desire more of the power of Christ's redemption, more power against sin, it grieves thy soul when sin puts up its head; thou complainest to thy Redeemer. 4. Thou wilt assuredly love and long for perfect redemption, Rom. vii. 24. 2 Tim. iv. 8.

Where Christ is accepted there is the seal of the Spirit, the graces of the Spirit, Eph. i. 13.

Where the soul bears fruit to God it is undoubtedly married to Christ, Rom. vii. 4.

It will necessarily follow, from the example of Job's safe and comfortable condition, when having this knowledge of a Redeemer, that the state of all those that have not this faith in a Redeemer must be dangerous and uncomfortable: they see no need, they have not sought after him, have no interest in him; sin hath power over them, to command them: afflictions do them hurt: hence many that were troubled about their sins in afflictions, are worse after; death will have power over them, as God's executioner to force their souls out of their bodies; the grave shall have power over them, as God's prison to hold them in prison-chains till the great assize; the resurrection shall have power over them, to raise them, against their wills, as God's jailor, to bring them before the judge; and then he that would have been their gracious Redeemer, shall be their terrible judge; their own consciences, witnesses; and God's redeemed ones, whose hearts were grieved with their sins, also witnesses against them; ministers who have proclaimed a Redeemer shall testify against them; and God himself shall acknowledge their witness to be true; and they having nothing to say for themselves, shall be cast and condemned. This shall aggravate their misery, that a Redeemer was offered—they refused him; loved sin and perdition more than Christ and redemption. They shall see the redeemed go with Christ into glory, while themselves are thrust with Satan, into everlasting fire.

YOUTH'S MONITOR;

OR,

A DISCOURSE

UPON ECCLESIASTES XII. 1.

TO THE

WORTHY AND RESPECTABLE GENTLEMAN,

MR. THOMAS WESTBY,

HEIR OF THE ANCIENT AND RELIGIOUS FAMILY OF RAVENFIELD, IN YORKSHIRE,

Grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied from God the Father, our Lord Jesus, and the blessed Spirit of truth.

WORTHY SIR,

THE many obligations I have been under to promote the welfare of your worshipful family, did extort from me, some time ago, a promise to write something for your private use, comprising admonition to youth, of which, since then, I have in some measure repented, and could rather have wished I had totally waved. First, Because I now perceive there are many far more excellent treatises extant upon this subject, to which I might have referred you, better than to have troubled you with my jejune scribbling. Secondly, Because my various avocations have so long protracted my finishing and sending it to you, that you are almost past it and have grown up, not only to maturity in age, but have given such proofs of your unparalleled diligence in your studies, and proficiency in learning, yea, and also of your exemplary piety, that it may seem needless to write what you so well know, and so well digest and practise. Yet, notwithstanding, upon second thoughts, I have at last persuaded myself to set apart a little time to prefix this Epistle to it and send it to you. First, Because I am frequently called upon by such as are concerned for you, to do this, reminding me of my promise: and a promise is a debt which I am conscientious in discharging, though in the smallest cases. Secondly, Because you are not yet past all danger of miscarrying. As long as you are at sea you may suffer shipwreck: corrupt nature will be working, Satan will be tempting, a wicked world seducing, and the heart is very deceitful; who knows how God

may leave young men of good education, great hopes, and mighty progress in religion. Hazael would not believe that so gentle a lamb as he thought himself, should be transformed into such a mad-dog as the prophet predicts he would be, and did prove. But what saith he? "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?"* Ah, little do we know what is in these corrupt hearts of ours! How many remarkable instances doth this age afford, of very hopeful young gentlemen, whose surprising civility and tractableness in religious families have given great indications of internal sanctity and saving conversion, but who have so far degenerated as to prove a scandal to religion, a reproach to their friends, and a ruin to their families. A swine in a fair meadow gets not many spots; and a lion chained up neither roars nor ravens; sed solve leonem et senties.† The viper on Paul's hand appeared not till it was heated; gunpowder lies as harmless as sugar till sparks fly upon it; occasio facit furem;‡ and without regeneration there will be a degeneracy. Forced motions are of no long continuance; the stone ascending only by the strength of the hand, soon falls; but that which moves naturally stops not till it come to the centre.

Saving grace is a second nature, yea, a divine nature; at first it is infused, but afterwards, being much exercised, it becomes as a settled habit. Besides, the man savingly converted and sanctified, comes under the promises of God relative to perseverance; being a member of Christ, he receives daily influence from him, and being in covenant with God hath omnipotence for his support, and God's fidelity for his sure auxiliary. But the most specious hypocrite, or the demurest formalist, hath not hold of God, nor hath God such hold of him, but he may and will fall foully, finally, totally, and so that sad verse is verified in him: Angelicus juvenis senibus satanizat in annis.‖ It is not to tell what a height of prodigious villany persons well educated may attain, and how they may willingly choose and prefer vain company to religious society, the ale bench before the church, impure songs before sacred hymns, yea, and employ their wicked wit in defending it: as Florus sung on the

* 2 Kings viii. 13. † Unloose the lion, and he will shew you what he is.
‡ Opportunity makes a thief. ‖ The young angel becomes a devil in old age.

ale bench: Nolo ego Cæsar esse, ambulare per Britannos, rigidas pati pruinas, &c. The witty emperor Adrian, hearing of it, answered extempore: Nolo ego Florus esse, ambulare per tabernas, latitare per propinas, pulices pati rotundas. The sensualist feels nothing of the sweetness of heavenly pleasures, and being accustomed to objects of sense only, sits down contented with that in which brutes can take as much pleasure, and freely sells his birthright for a mess of pottage: and the voluptuous cardinal will part with his portion in paradise for his portion in Paris. Not that I suspect you, dear sir, of such sad things; I hope "better things of you, even things that accompany salvation," Heb. vi. 9; but caution is needful to the best; and to you, to see to it, that your principles be well grounded, your nature changed, and your soul interested in Christ, else you may prove as bad as the worst, though, for the present, you seem better than the best. It is very easy for the subtile fox to change his skin, and not his nature. Oh, how many like chameleons are coloured according to the description of things near them, conforming to the company they converse with! But the sincere Christian hath his principles fixed both in head and heart, and his spirit is fixed on God his centre; his motto is, (like queen Elizabeth's) semper idem. His foot standeth in an even place,* lying square to every command, not as the hypocrite, who is a globular body, touching only in a point, and so tumbles from one side to another, as occasion serves. O what an excellent thing it is to be holy, ἐν πάσῃ ἀναστροφῇ, in every turn of place, company, condition, station, and relation!† None will be truly so, but he that is firmly centred upon the rock of ages, whose heart is set right for God; this grace of God is the Christian's bias, that inclines him to keep the right course; it is as the little stone that the bee is poised with, that the wind blows her not away. Alas! you meet with many a dreadful blast in passing over the sea of the world, and unless your ship be well ballasted, it will split or be sunk: but be sure you engage our blessed Lord to be your pilot, and he will bring you safe to the haven. I know you are to pass a more critical hour than ever yet you have seen, when you are passing from your puerile years into a more

* Psal. xxvi. 12. † 1 Pet. i. 15.

adult state, and exchanging your juvenile studies for maturer law speculations, amidst the flower of the nation, in the inns of court. There, there will your Shibboleth be tried, when brisk and airy youth shall meet with a course of life, removed from the bondage of a slavish pupilage, and company suited to a liberal genius, where you will find right hand temptations adapted to seduce your flexible nature, and have a plentiful allowance capacitating for enjoying what the senses crave. In such a case, there is great hazard; this will be Satan's hour, and the power of darkness. O what need have you then to pray, as Augustine, that the heart and the temptation may not meet together? That you may be helped in the shooting of this gulf, I beseech you suffer the words of exhortation, and take the advice of one who hath passed a long voyage of almost sixty years, who hath spied Sylla and Charybdis, and discovered some land-marks and sea-marks, of which I am bound to give you warning, and doubt not, but you will take some notice of them.

1. Daily read some portion of the scriptures, not only in their original language, but in your mother-tongue also; not for speculation or controversy, but for exciting your affections, and directing your ordinary conversation.

2. Frequently attend a plain and awakening ministry. Inquire and find out pure and powerful ordinances; where Christ is, there be you. Be not content with jingling rhetoric, or moral lectures, or empty formalities; sit by pure waters of the sanctuary.

3. Get unquestionable evidence of your effectual vocation and saving regeneration. Be not content without a principle of saving grace, faith unfeigned, a repentance to salvation, love without dissimulation, hope that will not make ashamed, and sincerity in all.

4. Observe, and obstruct betimes, the bent of natural corruption; take special notice of your own iniquity, the peculiar plague of your own heart: be sure to obviate that with a mortifying process of means, watching, fasting, fencing, and fighting.

5. Lie not down under guilt. Oh, when you are stung, look up by faith and prayer to the brazen serpent; let the

day's offences be the evening's recollection and humiliation, and to-morrow's caution and circumspection.

6. Always set yourself in God's presence: "Cave, spectat Cato.*" But you have a better watchword, there is an eye that sees, an ear that hears, a hand that writes down your words and works; nothing is hid from him.

7. Make conscience of thoughts. Heart sins and heart duties are not to be slighted. Springs and roots must be carefully looked to. Examine every passenger and its errand; if a bad thought assault thee, raise upwards a thought against it, for strength and pardon.

8. Give gracious admission to the Spirit's influence. This is a kind messenger from Father and Son. Send him not back without his errand; make him welcome when he comes to instruct in what is truth, to prompt to duty, or to keep back from sin.

9. Study your talents, and improve them for God. You are not master, but steward of health, riches, time, and faculties, and must give account. Keep straight reckoning, run not in arrears, think this the last day of your stewardship.

10. Think no sin nor duty little. A small duty omitted, leads to a great sin, and little sins are great in their tendency; a small wedge makes way for a greater; choose the greatest misery, rather than the least transgression.

11. Judge no mercy small; but look on it as worth the most sincere gratitude. It cost dear, even Christ's blood, and will cost you dear, if slighted—even the loss of it here, and eternal remorse hereafter. O study the claims of gratitude!

12. Be careful in selecting, and improve well your company. Make not the great, but the good your familiars. Countenance piety in the meanest, and bless not the profane, if rich, whom God abhors. Always make use of the wise, to improve yourself as a Christian or as a scholar.

13. Set every thing in its proper place and station. Let God be highest to you, as he is in himself. Love him above all, love other things for his sake, sit loose to the creature. Let religion be as your meat, recreation as the salt to other employments.

* Take care, Cato is observing.

14. Engage the whole man in God's worship. Make conscience of inward sincerity, and upright aims in God's immediate service. Do nothing without warrant from the word of God, and have a spirit suited to the word, and God's glory as the end.

15. Look to yourself amidst unforbidden liberty. The rankest poison is conveyed in sweetest perfumes; we suspect least when we are in most danger; a calm precedes a storm; descent into a whirlpool is easiest.

16. Look to principles as well as privileges. Mind dispositions, as well as God's dispensations about you. Wait on God in the way of his judgments as well as mercies. Evidence your title to the legacy you expect from God's love or Christ's purchase.

17. Let every one be better, none worse for you. Do good to every one's soul or body. A good report makes the bones fat. Have some savour of goodness in all companies. Exempla movent, monent, trahunt.* Make not others' sins yours.

18. Be of a public spirit, and of public utility. A private Christian is of both if he act as a Christian, but a magistrate (as you may come to be) much more. In both capacities, a selfish person is an empty vine and hateful.

19. Study perfection; rest not satisfied with attainments. Be holily covetous, and ambitious. Si dixisti, Satis est, periisti.† You will not be so good here, but you may and must be better. Grow in knowledge, holiness, acquaintance with God, and heavenliness.

20. Deny yourself in all. Get out of self into Christ in every duty. Be clothed with humility; that is the comeliest ornament. You can scarce have too mean thoughts of yourself, supposing you do not deny the grace of God in you, or unjustly detain from men the use of it, or from yourself the comfort you may have by it. But boast of, or trust in no good you have or do, for it is not yours, and it is mixed with your infirmities.

I am loth to weary you with rules which I cannot practise myself, but am reaching after. We all have a place in this

* Examples influence, admonish, and excite imitation.

† If thou sayest, It is enough, thou art undone.

school. Death only advances us to commence perfect graduates. It is above, that the spirits of just men are made perfect. O that we might endeavour to do God's will here on earth as it is done in heaven, with at least similar sincerity, zeal, universality, and constancy! It would be a happy thing if, when we are alone, we behave ourselves as if we were in heaven with God; and when we are with others, as if we were come down from heaven, to shew men what a life is led above.

But lest I should discourage you, I must put you in mind of Jacob's ladder, Jesus Christ, from whom you will have strength for your progress, pardon of failures, and a sure hold with his right hand to keep you from falling. If you have Christ you have all, if you want Christ you want all; according to that useful distich:—

> Si Christum discis satis est, si cætera nescis,
> Si Christum nescis, nihil est si cætera discis.

Oh for Christ at God's right hand for your justification, reconciliation, and acceptance in duties! Oh for Christ in your heart, for sanctification, mortification, and consolation! Study Christ, whom you can never know too well, or love too much. Christus et cœlum non patiuntur hyperbolem.* Christ is the sun of righteousness; the sun was ever admired and deified by the heathens, but we cannot overprize Christ; they called the sun ἥλιος, from עליון, the most high God, but we are sure our Jesus thought it no robbery to be equal with God. The sun is in constant motion. As the Father works in daily providence, so our dear Lord does in us and for us in his constant influence. The sun shoots his rays downwards, so doth our Lord convey his mercy to the sons of men, that our fire of love may mount upwards. O the benefits of this glorious sun! Eudoxus said, he was made for no other purpose than to behold the sun; yea, he could be content to be burnt up by the heat of it, so that by that near approach he might learn its nature. This, this indeed, is that noble and necessary study, without which we are dunces, and shall be swallowed up in eternal darkness. O sir, amongst all the varieties in this world, admire nothing but Christ. Time would fail to tell of his ex-

* Christ and heaven do not admit any hyperbole

cellencies, he is the chief of ten thousand. Study him in a fourfold respect:—

1. As propounded *nobis*, to our eyes and ears in the word and sacraments.

2. *Præ nobis*, before us, as our pattern for imitation.

3. *Pro nobis*, for us in the sacrifice of his death, as an expiation of our sins.

4. *In nobis*, in us by the habitation of his Spirit, that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, without which all the former are insignificant to our souls.

And in order to your prizing, admiring, and improving discoveries of the blessed Jesus, be sure you study original corruption, natural inability, and the abominable nature of sin, which is worse than the basest creature, the misery of hell, or the devil himself, inasmuch as the cause hath more malignity than the effect. This also is an endless, fathomless subject; never any sounded to the bottom of it, as Augustine saith of original sin: Traductâ culpâ, nihil ad prædicandum notius, nihil ad intelligendum secretius. It cannot be told how cunningly sin steals upon men, and how insinuatingly it works within them, and how notoriously it breaks out in many! and this comes on gradually, for, nemo repentè fit turpissimus.* Sin carries men down to hell by winding stairs. Obsta principiis; stop this disease betimes; flee from youthful lusts. Joseph would not breathe in the same air with his lascivious mistress. Be very scrupulous about tampering with occasions of sin.

> Ne pecces, Deus ipse videt, tuus angelus astat,
> Accusat Satanas et lex, mens conscia culpæ:
> Mors incerta furit, cruciat te luridus Orcus,
> Et manet æternum tristi damnatio pœnâ.

But if you have sinned despair not of pardon, repent and believe. Remember there is no sin so little but without repentance it is damnable; and there is no sin so great, but upon repentance and faith in Christ it is pardonable. Thus ends

Your cordial friend,

OL. HEYWOOD.

* None becomes wicked all at once.

Aug. 28th. 1689.

YOUTH'S MONITOR.*

Ecclesiastes xii. 1.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.

It is of great importance to the health of a place to have clear air and pure water; strong winds clear the air, pure springs produce wholesome streams: the former proceeds from the immediate hand of God, and the latter derives advantage from the sedulous hand of man. How careful are men to keep their springs from pollution or putrefaction! Much more care should all men take to prevent the seduction or depravation of youth, and to season their minds with salutary truths, and to have their hearts furnished with saving grace. O what influence may a rising generation have upon the future! Education and examples are propagating. God saith of Abraham, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord."† Observe it, how can Abraham command his successors when himself is dead and gone? The virtue of his commands survives his person; though he be gone, his pattern and instructions live and flourish to many generations: as many copies are taken after the original of the king's picture, or as one circle occasioned by a stone cast into water multiplies to a hundred. What need then have parents, tutors, ministers, and magistrates, to mould the spirits of young persons for God, to be a seminary for the church and the commonwealth! that such fresh and refreshing streams may make glad the city of our God. There is nothing in which young persons are more faulty than in their forgetting God, and there is nothing produces more mournful effects in

* The following Treatise is taken from a Manuscript Volume belonging to the descendants of Mr. Heywood, which has been written with great accuracy by the Author, and apparently finished with more care than several of the Works published by himself.

† Gen. xviii. 19.

the world, it brings both sin and misery; and there is nothing that God inculcates as a caution to Israel of old, so much as to guard against this: "Beware lest thou forget the Lord thy God—only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen;" therefore it is said, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God;"* this is the character of graceless souls.

No wonder then if the royal preacher affix this memento on the doors and before the eyes of all young persons, of both sexes and of all degrees, nobility, gentry, ministers, and people, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." It is now as seasonable an admonition as it was in his days; for as the world grows old, so young persons presently arrive at shamelessness, and to the highest degree of profligacy; though young in years, they grow old in sensual indulgences and profaneness.

The text presents to us two things; namely, *a duty*, "Remember thy Creator;" and *an argument*, "Before evil days come."

In the duty we have for consideration, *the agents*, young persons; *the act*, remember; *the object*, thy Creator; and *the season*, now, in the days of thy youth.

1. Why calls he on young persons?

(1.) Because the old will not hearken, but grow obstinate.

(2.) Because the young are most apt to forget God, chap. xi. 10; this is an antidote against their sin.

(3.) The word בחרות is feminine, this denotes tenderness of spirit; they are now most soft and pliable, soon receive impressions. The word is significant, rarely used, for other words that signify age are masculine.

(4.) The word may be translated choice of days. Saul is called, "a choice young man, and a goodly:" and any thing that is most excellent and the very best, is called choice, as "choice sepulchres," "choice gold and silver," "choice fir-trees;" and so this time of youth is the flower of man's age.† In these passages the same word is used.

2. Why doth he bid them remember? why not rather fear, love, serve God?

(1.) Because as forgetting God is the root of all sins of omission and commission; so remembering God is the principle of graces, holiness, and obedience. Men never commit a sin but they forget God; Heb. xii. 5, "Ye have forgotten the exhortation;" so holiness is mindfulness of God and his word.

* Deut. vi. 12. iv. 9. Ps. ix. 17.

† 1 Sam. ix. 2. Gen. xxiii. 6. xlix. 11. Prov. viii. 19. Isa. xxxvii. 24.

(2.) Words of knowledge usually denote affection and practice in scripture;* "This is life eternal to know God," John xvii. 3; so this word signifies, acknowledge, fear, love, serve God.

3. Why doth he say thy Creator? why not Jehovah, God, the Almighty?

(1.) The word Crestor is very emphatical, and shows God's right and man's duty; his relation to, and dependance on God, and his great ingratitude if he disregard his Creator.†

(2.) It is yet more significant if we consider that it is in the plural number, את־בוראיך, creatorum tuorum. First, To shew the plurality of persons in the divine unity, which is frequent in the scripture, Gen. i. 26.‡ Secondly, Because preservation is a sort of continued creation, and lays multiplied obligations on the creature: and it is *thy Creator.*

4. What is the import of this word—*now?*

The word is copulative, וזכרי, and remember; the Hebrew word ו, signifies a hook, or crooked nail to join things together: so it is used Exod. xxvi. 37, "Their hooks shall be of gold:"|| so the meaning is, either, (1.) that it is a conjunction copulative, joining this to the former two verses, which in the Hebrew bible are part of this chapter, (for division of chapters is a modern thing and human.) Or, (2.) an additional clause and signifies—moreover; as if he had said, I do not only give the young man negative rules, but positive commands; thou must not only remove anger, or grounds of sorrow from thy heart, but be sincerely and seriously religious. A negative holiness must not serve thy turn, but be truly as well as timely pious. Or, (3.) if it be translated—now, it adds further emphasis to the exhortation; as if it were said, childhood and youth are vanity, therefore now while thy years are green, and thy bones moistened with marrow, even now, in this dark age, get thine eye enlightened with the knowledge of God; and in this slippery age, get thy soul duly stayed and settled with the remembrance of God thy Creator, and the ends of thy creation: pass not this flowery season of thy age in vanity, but get thy thoughts fixed upon God.

Doctrine, *It well becomes young persons to remember their Creator.*

The days of youth are a proper time for souls to be mindful of their Creator; it is never unseasonable, but it is then most suitable. Youthful piety is lovely and commendable, pleasant and advantageous, excellent and honourable; it is a jewel in a gold ring, a pearl or precious stone curiously enchased, that doth make the possessor appear rich and highly respected.

* Verba notitiæ affectum et praxin connotant.
‡ Psalm cxlix. 2. Isa. liv. 5.
† Deut. xxxii. 6.
|| Exod. xxvii. 10.

1. This is typified in the first-fruits to be dedicated to God. Exod. xxiii. 19, "The first of the first-fruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord thy God." Mr. Ainsworth observes out of Maimonides upon Exod. xxii. 29, that the Hebrews were to bring the first-fruits of seven things, namely, of wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates. And if one bring other besides these seven kinds, they are not sanctified; only observe, the passage saith, "thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits." Again, "The first-born of thy sons shalt thou give unto me." This is of importance to us, and the paschal lamb must be a lamb "of the first year," Exod. xii. 5, which also hath its significancy, for the Jews thus expound it: that a lamb after it was eight days old and forward, was allowable to be offered in sacrifice for the passover, and if it was but an hour older than the year, it was unlawful. This typifies not only the perfection of Christ, but that youth must be devoted to God.

2. It is commanded, Matt. vi. 33, "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." First, in order of time; the first thing in the day, begin every morning with God; the first in the day of natural life, begin your lives with godliness. Some think this precept refers to the account of Solomon's asking wisdom, 1 Kings iii. 6—11. True grace or wisdom, is the first link in the golden chain that draws all things necessary and desirable after it. God commands, that all ages should praise him; "young men and maidens; old men and children," Psal. cxlviii. 12. Aged David leaves this legacy with his son Solomon, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9, "And thou Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind," &c. Paul the aged thus charges his son Timothy, 1 Tim. iv. 12—16, "Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity," &c. So Titus, ii. 6, "Young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded," or discreet; that is, seriously religious.

3. It is commended and rewarded: Josiah is praised, because in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David, his father; and in the twelfth year, he began to clear Judah and Jerusalem from the high places. What a fine character is left upon record of young Abijah, the son of Jeroboam, 1 Kings xiv. 13, "The child shall die, and all Israel shall mourn for him, and bury him; for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam." Something grateful or acceptable was found in him; God takes well a small good in

hopeful youth. Jesus, beholding the towardly young man, loved him, Mark x. 21, though it was not sincere or saving good that was in him. God reckons it both as a great ornament to young men, and an inestimable privilege to his people. Amos ii. 11, "And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men, for Nazarites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord?" As if he should say, you may well think I had a great respect for you, when I not only received you into covenant, but your children; yea, into the covenant of Levi; and not only when they were grown up, but even while children, as Samuel and Jeremiah. Strange and rare it is, that young men, who are most addicted to pleasures and wine, become so abstemious, grave, and seriously religious; this reflects honour on the persons and people, where such singular devotedness to God is found.

For more profitably discussing this important subject, I shall propose these inquiries:

I. What is implied and intended in this word, remember?

II. How young persons may use their memories, so as to promote religion?

III. Wherein their remembering their Creator may have an influence on practical godliness?

IV. Why it becomes young persons to remember their Creator, or be seriously religious?

And so to apply the whole.

I. What is the meaning and import of this word, *remember*, which may discover the reason why the Holy Ghost lays so much stress upon it?

I answer, the word, remember, is very extensive and comprehensive in its import, for it intends four things:

1. To call to mind things past. This is the proper import of the word remember. Psal. lxxvii. 10, "I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the works of the Lord, thy wonders of old." Even so young men must remember,

(1.) What they are made of: Gen. ii. 7, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground." So the wise man informs us in this chapter, ver. 7, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was." O young man, forget not thy origin, thou art nothing but a little mean clay clotted together with blood, as mortar tempered with water, and animated with subtile breath, whereby thou art wrought up to a walking statue. A consideration of this would pluck down thy peacock's plumes, and lay thy honour in the dust, when thou beginnest to advance thyself as if thou wert not a mortal creature; it is a wonder to

think how men's spirits are elevated with riches and honours, as if they were not mortals.

Men's great sin and misery proceed from their forgetfulness of themselves, whence they are, and whither they are going. Hence Philip king of Macedon, employed a page every morning to call to him, "Remember, sir, you are a mortal." Would to God, young persons would consider, "that they dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust; which are crushed before the moth."* You are brittle glasses, soon broken; crazy tabernacles, at best, quickly dissolved.

(2.) Reflect on your sinful state and acts. You were altogether born in sin; estranged from God even from the womb, going astray as soon as you were born, speaking lies.† You come into the world with a sad stock of sin, and set up that wretched trade as soon as you exercise reason; while you were children, you soon learned to lie, swear, mock at godliness, be disobedient to parents. Augustine, observing two children sucking at a mother's breast, the one cast a peevish, morose look at the other, envying that it should suck at the other breast, cried out, O Lord, when was the time, where was the place, that I was free from the buddings forth of this accursed root? Young persons should be often saying, "I remember my faults this day;" this is the true nature of genuine repentance, for men to bethink themselves, or bring back to their heart.‡ Sin came from the heart in commission, and must be brought back upon the heart as a burden, if ever there be repentance. O remember the sins of childhood and youth, that God may not remember them. || Alas! when I was a child, I thought, spake, and acted as a child; I was childish in my conceits, senseless in my imaginations, wild in my notions, and brutish in my affections and actions: poor vain man, I would needs be wise, though I was born like a wild ass's colt. § I was empty of good, and soon filled with trash and pollution, and was still generating more, till at last my soul was loaded with guilt and impurities. O that they were a pressing load upon me!

(3.) Remember the rebukes of Providence under which you have lain; these are worth recollecting, not only correction by parents, but chastisements of God's hand. If you reverenced fathers of your flesh, will you not subject yourselves to the Father of spirits, that you may live? Have not some of you borne the yoke in your youth, sicknesses, small pox, fevers, agues, and other weaknesses? Yea, have you not been scourged with your own rod? Just as fond children eat fruit till they

* Job iv. 19. † Psalm lviii. 3. ‡ Gen. xli. 9. 1 Kings viii. 47.
|| Psalm xxv. 7. § Job xi. 12.

become disordered, even so men's own wickedness doth oft correct them, and their backslidings do reprove them: * so that they may thank themselves for what they suffer. Oh that you could say as the church, Lam. iii. 19—21, "Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall, my soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to mind, therefore have I hope." You may learn so much good from reflecting on what you met with in your younger days, as may prove beneficial all the days of your life; both to keep you low in humility, and raise up your hearts in hopeful encouragement.

(4.) You must remember the many obligations laid upon you in your younger days to be the Lord's; how early you were dedicated to God in baptism; you were given up to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and his name put upon you; you were washed in the laver of baptism, and are engaged to put on Christ, to furnish the answer of a good conscience to God. You must remember your parents' examples and instructions; their counsels, admonitions, and prayers: for the vows of God are upon you. The kindness of God should lead you to repentance, and it becomes you to be often saying as David, Psalm cxvi. 16, "O Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds." O young persons, think and think again upon the various and gracious acts of Providence, these will engage you to gratitude and obedience. Psalm cv. 5, 6, "Remember his marvellous works that he hath done.—O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen." O be ashamed to be unfruitful under all these genial showers from God and man. Tremble to break through all these bonds. How dreadful will your case be, if all these be lost upon you, if sin supplant these methods of grace.

2. The word signifies, a representing of things absent, as if they were present before our eyes; or things distant, just at hand. God was much withdrawn from David's soul, but yet he could think of an absent God. Psalm lxxvii. 3, "I remembered God and was troubled." This remembering is believing meditation and heavenly contemplation upon unseen objects, which is a heavenly life. The natural eye only beholds things present as objects of sense; but faith beholds things not seen. † This is called by Augustine, ‡ "a kind of mathematical memory containing dimensions, which the sense of the body does

* Jer. ii. 19. † Heb. xi. 1.

‡ Mathematicorum memoria, quæ dimensionum rationes continet, quarum nullam corporis sensus impressit.

not impress upon the mind." Much more doth the soul conceive of objects far beyond the bodily senses, as,

(1.) God himself. O what heavenly musings had David upon God, which occasioned real effects on his elevated soul: Psalm lxiii. 5, 6, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness—when I remember thee upon my bed, (how is that?) and meditate on thee in the night watches." When the memory is full of God, the heart is sweetly employed and delighted with divine enjoyments; especially the soul is awed to a spiritual obedience by remembering of God's omnipresence. "I have set the Lord always before me," said David:"* and again, "Thy loving-kindness is before mine eyes, and I have walked in thy truth." O happy soul, that can thus remember God, and think, now God's eye is upon me, God forbid I should do any thing unbecoming such a presence.

(2.) The word of God, his precepts, promises, and threatenings. We are not always reading the word, but must be constantly thinking of it, and meditating on it "day and night." David was much given to this sacred employment of his sanctified memory. One while, he will "hide God's word in his heart, meditate in his precepts:" and again he says, "I will delight myself in thy statutes, I will not forget thy word. I remember thy judgments of old, O Lord, and have comforted myself. I will never forget thy precepts, for with them thou hast quickened me:"† and many such passages. Oh of what use would the daily remembrance of God's word be to us! The precepts would direct our practice, the promises would furnish us with pleas in prayer. If "the word of God dwell richly" in us,‡ it would be our daily monitor to shun sin and practise duty, for we never commit a sin, or omit a duty, but we forget a command. Heb. xii. 5, "You have forgotten the exhortation."

(3.) We must remember instances; examples of mercy, justice, piety, charity, humility, sobriety, chastity, and all other virtues. Examples are moving, melting admonitions. A bove majore discit arare minor. || Older men and aged women, by holy practices, are detailers of good things to the younger. Ministers and others must be patterns of good works. Mark the end of men's conversation: "Be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."§ Cæsar set Alexander before him as a model, and the Ephesian law would be a seasonable item to young men—*Αεὶ ὑπομιμνησκεσθαι τινὸς τῶν τῃ ἀρετῃ χρώμενων*, ever to bear in mind,

* Psalm xvi. 8. xxvi. 3. † Psalm i. 2. cxix. 11, 15, 16, 52, 93.
‡ Col. iii. 16. || The younger ox learns to plough from the older.
§ Tit. ii. 3, 4, 7. Heb. xiii. 7. vi. 12

persons eminent in the practice of that virtue you would imitate; and this would make us ashamed of lagging so far behind, and would quicken our pace in pressing after. The scriptures and histories are full fraught with examples of most heroic acts. It is a quicker despatch to travel our journey by examples than by precepts; * yet see those patterns be according to precept, follow men no further than they follow Christ. And as you must remember good men as way-marks, so remember instances of bad men as rocks and shelves, where many have been shipwrecked and drowned: "Remember Lot's wife;" † and let others' ruin be a caution to thee. Read history lest thou become a history, and take warning by others' harms. Always bear in mind the ancient and later monuments of God's vengeance, so shall you wash your feet in the blood of the wicked, and cleanse your souls by observing the spots of others. It is a mercy when God hangs up others in gibbets to be warnings to us. Study Deut. xxiv. 8, 9. 1 Cor. x. 6, 11.

(4.) Remember Jesus Christ; his person, natures, offices, death and passion, his resurrection, ascension, and session at God's right hand. Oh! whatever you think of or forget, be sure you keep Christ in memory: our Lord appointed his supper for this end, "Do this in remembrance of me." Remember Christ's mean birth, holy life, accursed death, and high advancement to God's right hand. Determine with yourselves to know, own, study, and admire nothing but Christ crucified; esteem all things dross aud dung in comparison of him,; ‡ let Christ be as honey in your mouth, as melody in your ear. ‖ O remember his "love more than wine;" § that is, lay up records of love for future times, when it may be withdrawn as to the sense thereof. It is the great interest of believers to set up memorials of divine love and its appearances. O sirs, how can you forget Christ who did remember you at so dear a rate? Methinks every soul should be like that good man, that never went to bed or rose up, but had this in his mind and mouth: "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift," 2 Cor. ix. 15.

3. Another signification of the word—remember, is to have a foresight of, and preparation for something future. Thus God saith, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy;" ¶ and I shall take that part of our remembering, proper to all persons, but especially to young persons, as an instance,

(1.) The sabbath is to be remembered; which implies, not only a reflecting on God's institution, and keeping the sense

* Longum iter per præcepta, brevius per exempla.
† 1 Cor. xi. 1. Luke xvii. 32. ‡ 1 Cor. xi. 24, 25. ii. 2. Phil. iii. 7, 8.
‖ Mel in ore, melos in aure. § Cant. i. 4. ¶ Exod. xx. 8.

of past sabbaths still upon our spirits, but a serious preparation for it, arranging our weekly affairs, so as to be no impediments in the sanctifying of it, maintaining a composed frame of spirit suitable to it, to enter freely into the duties of it. Alas, how apt are young men to forget whose day it is, and grow volatile and frothy upon it, so finding their own pleasure.* The more of the sabbath you have on weekdays, the less of the week you will have on the sabbath. You should put on your best spiritual suit, (as it is said a devout Jew did his bodily, before the approaching sabbath,) saying, Come, my soul, account this the queen of days, the very face and beauty of all other days.

(2.) Remember the changes and vicissitudes you may meet with in this life, and accordingly you must forecast, and provide for both best and worst: and he that is stocked with grace for prosperity, will be better furnished for adversity. Methinks, young persons are like mariners that are about to set sail, that must prepare rigging, cables, victuals, fresh water, anchors, and other things necessary for a long voyage; not knowing how tedious and hazardous it may prove. Thus must young persons get well furnished, for they may say as Moses to Pharoah, "We know not with what we must serve the Lord until we come thither."† Little do you, my young friends, know, what sharp services God may call you to; you must therefore sit down and count the cost of the building, whether you have sufficient to finish it.‡ A young man unprincipled, is like a ship without mast, tackling, anchor, or other provisions; which is at the mercy of winds and waves, on the vast ocean, and is soon lost, or sunk, or driven on rocks and shelves and dashed to pieces. O sirs, I beseech you remember, you may be cast into such companies, places, snares, and straits, that all the wit you have will not bring you off, except you have received both renewing and assisting grace; and the latter you cannot expect without the former. You must stock yourselves with all things necessary, as young persons in setting up a trade, that your stock may not be run out before you have accomplished your purpose, nor your money spent before your journey come to a close.

(3.) Remember your death. It is a foolish word of inconsiderate persons to say, 'I no more thought of such a thing than of my death.' Fond man! what reason hast thou to forget death? thou sayest, 'I am young yet;' senseless arguing, art thou too young to die? hast thou not seen, as young as thou snatched away? shouldst thou not wait "all the days of thy appointed time, till thy change come?"‖ Canst thou be assured thou shalt live to old age? A youth came to a Hebrew

* Isa. lxiii. 13. † Exod. x. 26. ‡ Luke xiv. 28. ‖ Job xiv. 14.

doctor, desiring him to give him some rules to instruct him to live and die well. The doctor said, how old art thou? He answered him, eight years of age. Come again, said the doctor, six or seven years hence, and I will instruct thee, thou art yet young enough. Yea, sir, replied the child, but I have been in the church-yard, or cemetry, and I laid me on a grave that was as short as I, whereby I do perceive I may die before I shall arrive to that age: a wise answer. Lord, open the eyes of the young, to see death posting on towards them, behind them, as it is before the faces of the old; it is as dangerous, though less visible; therefore you must betimes claim kinship to the worms, for they will shortly claim kinship with you, say as Job xvii. 14, "I have said to corruption, thou art my father; to the worm, thou art my mother, and my sister." This is the wise man's advice in the context—"Let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many;"* that is, death; for the grave is a dark, lonesome house. He saith, "they are many," he saith not, infinite or everlasting; for though the grave be a long home, yet eternity of weal or woe is our last and everlasting destiny. You must die certainly; you may die soon, and suddenly; yea, if you be wicked, you may die before your time.† Alas! most men forget this dying hour.

(4.) Remember your accounts. Our Lord, as a nobleman, delivers ten pounds to ten servants, with this charge: "Occupy till I come." This is every one's work, especially that of young persons. O what a comfort to say, "Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds!" God gives every one a talent: woe be to that slothful servant, who lays up his talent in a napkin; but a thousand woes to him that wastes it in wickedness. Think within thyself, young man, how shall I give account of health, strength, genius, parts, accomplishments, learning, riches, honours, and my golden hours? Shall God give me the use of these, and the devil receive the application? If my master shall give me a sum of money, and send me to the market to buy necessaries, and I spend it in prodigality, and come drunk home; how dare I look him in the face? If my father be at great charge in my education at schools, and I return a poor silly ignoramus; how can I answer it? "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God."‡ How shall I come off before the impartial, heart-searching Judge? Since then, I must appear at the general assizes, I am resolved to keep a petty session beforehand—daily to set matters straight with God and my soul; according to that good counsel:

* Eccles. xi. 8. † Eccles. vii. 17. ‡ Rom. xiv. 12.

Sum up at night what thou hast done by day,
And in the morning, what thou hast to do;
Dress and undress thy soul, mark the decay
And growth of it, if with thy watch, that too
Be down, then wind up both, since we shall be
Most surely judged, make thy accounts agree.*

4. Remembering, imports an affectionate, practical, spiritual, improving of truths, objects, or things known and thought of: and in this sense is the text to be understood. It includes these four things—*Valuation*, *affection*, *application*, and *observation*.

(1.) Valuation. So the word is used, Eccles. ix. 15, "No man remembered that same poor man;" that is, nobody prized him according to his real worth, or great usefulness; no man praised him, or spoke well of him; none gave him thanks, being an obscure person, and expecting no more good from him. In this sense we must remember our Creator; that is, so as to admire him, and to praise him; scripture is full of this. Psal. cxlv, is composed as a psalm of adoration, addressed to the infinite Creator; verse 10, "All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord, and thy saints shall bless thee." All God's works do celebrate his praises objectively, as they give occasion for man's adoring their Creator. Man, as man, praiseth God actively; but saints only, bless God intentionally and regularly; for this purpose was Psalm civ. composed. O that we could also learn this great lesson, in which the inanimate creatures are so perfect!

(2.) Affection. Cant. i. 4, "We will remember thy love more than wine." O the blessed relish and transporting delight, our souls have in the late received expressions of divine love! It is more sweet than delicious wines. It becomes all, and especially the young, (who will take delight in something) to delight themselves in the Lord, which is both their duty and their privilege.† O that young persons would exercise their thoughts with pleasure on the name, nature, properties, word, and works of our glorious Jehovah; and also the person, natures, states, the actions, discourses and prayers, the sufferings, death and resurrection, the offices, purchase, and glorious intercession of our dear Lord Jesus. Surely these, if any thing, are worth an affectionate remembrance, that we may echo and answer his love with love.‡ When, O when, shall that great command be young men's employment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, soul, and mind!"‖ O where can you bestow your virgin affections better! Whom can you think on with greater complacency? Surely, the sunshine of divine love should produce the heavenly reflection of your love back to him; since his is costly love, yours pleasant.

* Herbert's church, p. 16. † Psal. xxxvii. 4. Isa. lviii. 14.
‡ Amo amorem ejus.—*Augustine.* ‖ Matt. xxii. 37.

(3.) Remembrance, imports application, and believing appropriation. On God's part, it imports his acceptance; Psalm xx. 3, "Remember all thy offerings;" but how? it is added, "and accept thy burnt-sacrifice." Thus persons should so remember God, as to accept and meditate on him: so ver. 7, "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God;" we are resolved to depend only on God. When our Lord saith of his supper, "Do this in remembrance of me," doubtless he means application and improvement. Alas, what comfort can we take in God or Christ, unless we fiducially own him as ours: this is the main thing in religion. Our duty lies in adverbs, our comfort in possessives. The remembrance of God strikes terror into an uninterested soul. What is God, if he be not my God?* And what are we better for him, (savingly) if we do not appropriate him? Hence, saith the church, Isa. xxvi. 8, "The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee." O sirs, this is the very life and marrow of your remembering your Creator, by owning him as your Father in Christ; "This is life eternal, that they might know (not by mere speculation, but believing application,) thee to be the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Faith can reach as high as heaven, and embrace far distant objects:† yea, such is the nature of faith, that it can really appropriate all in God, and in Christ, and in the promises of the word, to itself, and make them its own.

(4.) Remembrance, imports a practical observation, and a conversation suitable to this remembrance. The life must correspond with the belief; hence God often repeats it, that his people must remember, and do all God's commandments. David saith, "I have remembered thy name, O Lord, in the night, and have kept thy law." Practical remembrance is most useful and comfortable. Men do truly remember no more than they practice. Head-knowledge signifies little, without lively workings in the heart, and holy works in the life. If you could say all the bible by heart, if you have not the law of God written on your heart, and transcribed in your life, it were not of any worth. Some have had prodigious memories, they could repeat whole sermons, and give an account of volumes; yet they have forgotten their duty: this will prove a complicated, aggravated sin. Thy head challenges thy feet, and thy wicked heart perverts both. A strong memory contradicted by an obstinate will, leaves the possessor inexcusable. Science, without conscience, is a torch to light men to hell; dictates of conscience, without

* Quid est Deus, si non sit meus. † Heb. xi. 13.

practical compliance, will prove a faggot to increase the unquenchable fire. Know as much as you can; remember what you have learned; and practise what you do remember. Remember the rule, and square every step by it. Let memory retain, that life may profit by, divine truths.

Thus I have despatched the first head, what is implied and intended in this word, remember, and remembering our Creator.

II. The next inquiry to occupy our attention is, how young persons may use their memories, so as to promote religion? Or, what helps they may employ to assist them in their remembering their great Creator.

First, A natural, artificial, and spiritual memory must be distinguished,

1. There is a natural memory in man, and also in brutes.* Every man hath something of memory. Cœlius Rhodiginus tells us of the hart, that it hath so bad a memory, that if it be feeding and hungry, yet if it look up, it forgets what it was doing, and seeks a new pasture: and the historian informs us of a man, that had forgotten his own name; that however might be occasioned by falls, blows, or diseases. But all men, naturally, have a memory. The philosophers observe, the dullest geniuses for invention have often the most tenacious memories; so things that receive slowest impressions, as a stone, keep them the longest; but wax and water have quick impressions, and they are soon lost. This however is certain, that some men have naturally far better memories than others; experience demonstrates this: but this is not the memory I am speaking of, except as the foundation of what follows.

2. There is an artificial memory; some in this way have arrived at a prodigious degree of retentiveness of memory. Seneca, by artificially improving his memory, could repeat two thousand names in order, and two hundred verses, beginning with the first syllables at the end. Many other instances have been given us of the stupendous memories which some have had; but this is not the recollection I design, yet we make use of lawful helps to further our remembrance.

3. There is a spiritual memory, that is, the natural faculty of the soul spiritualized. (1.) Subjectively, by renewing the faculties, or (2.) Objectively, by fixing the memory on other and better objects than it was wont to think upon. Our Lord tells us, John xiv. 26, that the Holy Ghost shall bring all things to our remembrance. This is done immediately by the Spirit's assisting the memory, as he doth the mind, will, and affections, in other duties, helping our infirmities;† or else through the

* Memoria in brutis, reminiscentia in hominibus. † Rom. viii. 26.

medium of ministers and ordinances, and even by the endeavours of Christians with themselves, using God's appointed means to quicken and fortify their memories. It is thus that I shall answer this query:—What helps must a young man employ to further his soul in his remembering of God, and divine things?

1. Learn to know what the memory is, and of what use it may be in religion. Memory is a wonderful faculty. Cicero admires it, and calls it, a remarkable evidence of the divinity.* Augustine calls it, the internal receptacle, dens, or caverns of the mind, where it lays up what it receives.† Neither of them can tell where the memory is seated. But the scripture saith, Luke i. 66, they "laid them up in their hearts;" and "Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart," Luke ii. 19; in her heart, in a moral, if not in a natural sense: heart memory is the best memory. Heathens can tell us that, Mnemosyne is the mother of the muses: I am sure memory is needful in divinity. What are we better for what we hear unless we remember it? The apostle saith of the gospel, that by it we are saved, if we keep in memory what is preached, else we believe in vain;‡ he means the substance of gospel doctrine, though not every particular sentence. Bring this to thy conscience, shall I hear in vain, read in vain, believe in vain, and so ruin my own soul? God forbid, the matter is of infinite importance. I must look after a good memory, or I neglect and endanger my salvation. God forbid, I should excuse myself with saying, I have a bad memory, God looks for no more than he gives. I have a memory and must use it to his glory; I can remember worldly things, and why not spiritual?

2. Rest not contented with an unsanctified heart. A gracious heart will help to a tenacious memory. "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, soul, and body may be preserved blameless;" this will take in the memory. O that in the inmost part, the Lord would "make me to know wisdom;" that "my reins might instruct me in the night seasons."‖ God's image is in all wisdom, righteousness, and true holiness.§ A habit of grace in the heart would be a bias in the soul to incline it God-wards; grace gives wings to all the faculties to mount aloft. Nothing strengthens the unstable memory so much as grace; the memory is without tightness, and lets all good out; but grace stops the chinks of this leaky vessel. It is grace only that "renews a right," in the margin, constant "spirit within."¶ Grace only expels those

* Insigne divinitatis argumentum. † Animi ventrem, antra, cavernas.
‡ 1 Cor. xv. 1, 2. ‖ 1 Thess. v. 23. Psal. li. 6. xvi. 7.
§ Col. iii. 10. Eph. iv. 24. ¶ Psal. li. 10.

swarms of vain thoughts that lodge in me, and fills every corner of my heart with something of God. O "unite my heart to fear thy name;" engage my whole soul to thee. If God have something within me, I shall not forget him and his benefits;* that which is heaven-born will surely be mounting heavenwards.

3. Be sure of being savingly related to God, and interested in Christ. Relation is the root of remembrance: "Can a maid forget her ornaments? Can a woman forget her sucking child?"† In a public edict a man will be sure to retain in his memory what relates to his own case and tenure. "Hear thou it and know it for thy good;" if you cannot think of all the sermon, secure at least what concerns thyself; say, this is for me. The language of the believer is, "Who loved me, and gave himself for me. He is my God and I will prepare him a habitation (in my heart;) my father's God, and I will exalt him."‡ Interest or property is an excellent help to memory: if Jehu forget other things, yet he can remember a prophecy that related to himself against the house of Ahab, 2 Kings ix. 25, 26. If you will not remember others' concerns, yet surely you will remember your own. Will a man forget to eat his meat or put on his clothes? Surely if God were your God, though you could think of nothing else, you would with Thomas break out into a rapture, and cry, "My Lord and my God;"‖ he forgot all to think of this, and this word *my* was a special memorandum.

4. Endeavour to increase in your hearts the flame of divine love. Men cannot forget what they love: the rich old usurer will not forget where he laid his bag of gold. Love frequently reviews the object, and so renews decaying memory. Things highly esteemed by us, are deeply imprinted in us; a warm heart will influence the head; strong affections will be prevalent arguments. The man thinks of his beloved when waking, and dreams of her when sleeping; he cannot forget her, every thing he sees puts him in mind of her: so would it be if your heart were wrapt in the flame of love: "Set me as a seal upon thy heart;" what follows? "as a seal upon thine arm."§ Observe it, that which is on the heart in point of affection, will be on the arm as to observation and remembrance. Love much and you remember well; what has affected your heart you cannot easily forget. David's heart was depressed very low at times, and then raised very high in the actings of faith, and it rests upon his spirits long after: so he saith Psalm xlii. 5, 6, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me, therefore will I re-

* Psal. lxxxvi. 11. ciii. 1, 2.
† Jer. ii. 32. Isa. xlix. 15.
‡ Job v. 27. Gal. ii. 20. Exod. xv. 2.
‖ John xx. 28.
§ Song viii. 6.

member thee from the land of Jordan and of the Hermonites:" David upon the throne cannot forget poor David a fugitive.

5. Take pains with your spirits, to work things on your heart. Experience tells us what wonderful memories some dull people have arrived at with taking pains. It is not to say what God's blessing and man's industry may produce; the more weight is laid on the seal, the deeper impression is made on the wax. Memory carries the image of things: often viewing things begets lively images: thinking oft on truths is harrowing the seed, it covers that which else would be picked up or washed away. "Meditate on these things, give thyself wholly to them:" * a transient glance will not do, you must work things into your spirits. You must incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; cry, lift up your voice, seek, search for it as for hidden treasures:—then you shall understand the fear of the Lord, Prov. ii. 2—8. Let a burning glass be slightly passing, though the stuff be never so combustible, it takes no hold; but if it be fixed, the sun-beams unite and kindle fire: just so it is,—"Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us?" † Serious recollection brings strong impressions. An apple when tossed in the hand, leaveth the smell and odour of it behind, so do truths.

6. Compare things together, if you cannot remember things by themselves taken abstractedly; yet when you form ideas of things in your mind, a visible object may bring to recollection something invisible: as the sight of one man may put you in mind of another that you had forgotten, thus an artificial memory is produced. But I shall only give you one instance: when God has delivered a prophecy or a promise, and we forget it, when we see any thing like an accomplishment, it will bring the first notice of it into our remembrance. When former prophets threatened judgment, and it came to pass, then they could call menaces to mind and say: "Like as the Lord of Hosts thought to do unto us,—so hath he dealt with us," Zech. i. 6. When the disciples saw Christ's zeal, they remembered the prophecy, "The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up," John ii. 17. And after his resurrection, they remembered Christ's expression, which was not only a monitor, but a key to unlock that mystery. ‡ Jesus's miracles brought John's preaching to their remembrance, and became a means of their believing: so may you, when ministers are dead and gone. Think, O now I remember, how frequently and seriously such a good man inculcated such a truth; it comes fresh into my thoughts as if it had been but spoken yesterday; now I feel the truth of what he

* 1 Tim. iv. 15. † Luke xxiv. 32. ‡ See Acts xi. 16. Luke xxii. 61.

spoke of the evil of sin, both in the guilt of it upon my conscience, and the punishment of it on my whole man. I now think of that great truth, of the need I have of Christ, how precious he is: he told me I must suffer persecution, and when I feel, I cannot but remember that prediction, 1 Thess. iii. 3, 4; and so in other things.

7. Frequently repeat to others what you would remember: this is a great help. Many will give an account of various passages in sermons, preached thirty or forty years ago, who have forgotten as pertinent and profitable matter spoken the day before. What is the reason? They have familiarized them to themselves by frequent repetition. If you would presently, after hearing a sermon, or reading a chapter, fall into discourse about it, it would rivet your notions in your minds. Scholars find this an excellent help to memory, nothing is of such advantage: hence Deut. vi. 6, 7, "These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart." How? "Thou shalt teach, (Hebrew is, whet or sharpen) them diligently unto thy children, and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house." O that talk of sermons, scriptures, and truths, were more in fashion! If every one would cast in his mite, and contribute something, what a treasure would be gathered! If every one bring a little fuel, what a fire would be kindled! The two disciples talked together of the things that had happened, and they had burning hearts: before they parted, our Lord joined himself to hold a parley with conversing disciples. * Be not ashamed to speak of the things of God: David saith, "I will speak of thy testimonies before kings and will not be ashamed."† How often do we find David's sacred lips expressing the delights of his heart, which return with great advantage upon his memory, and help his meditation: and this is the duty and characteristic of a truly pious man who hath the law of God in his heart, his mouth "speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment," Psal. xxxvii. 30, 31.

8. Proceed immediately to the practice or improvement of those truths which come home to your conscience. Practice is both the end and means of a good memory: imprisoning truths quite loseth them. If you "hold the truth in unrighteousness," ‡ it cannot stay long with you. If you live not answerably, you bury all in the grave of the oblivion; but present, lively practice doth, as it were, harden the hopeful buds and blossoms of good, that they are not so soon blasted. Hence when David had a good thought in his mind, he worked it on his affections, and brought it into action. Psalm cxix. 55—57,

* Luke xxiv. 14, 32. † Psal cxix. 46. See ver. 13, 27, 43, 52. ‡ Rom. i. 18.

"I have remembered thy name, O Lord, in the night, and have kept thy law." See, his was a practical memory: and what then? "This I had, because I kept thy precepts." What had he? It may be a better memory, or more elevated affections, or more evidence of God's love to his soul: "Thou art my portion, O Lord." Thus an activity of life and contemplation, do mutually contribute assistance to each other, if you live what you hear, you shall know more: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." Sin stupifies the memory, holiness fortifies it; no man hath a better memory than the practical Christian.

9. Study the art of forgetfulness. Themistocles said, "he would rather learn the art of forgetfulness than of memory." One saith, we shall never make progress, till we unlearn that well, which we learned ill. A boy will never spell well till he forget his wrong spelling. Socrates desired his scholars to unlearn what they had learned; so must you. "Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house." I dare not say, with some philosophers, that discipline is nothing else but Αναγνωσις, a remembrance: for they held, that souls existed before they were in these bodies, as Pythagoras did. Indeed, if we respect Adam's perfect knowledge in innocency, there may be some truth in it; but, alas! by his fall, his intellect was obscured, and how soon he forgot God! We have lost God's image, and a new creation is necessary;* and how awfully have we descended into the grave of oblivion, remaining there till divine grace work the miracle of a first resurrection, and a second birth.† The tablet must be made clean before you can write any thing on it; you must be "transformed by the renewing of your mind;"‡ then you will approve God's will. No man can form a new impression in wax, till the old be defaced; so you must forget the world, its profits, pleasures, and honours, for better: they say, that children's memories are clear,‖ because not ruffled with worldly circumstances. O that every soul were "as a weaned child!"§ for how oft do the cares of the world thrust out the word of God: and it were well if we were children in malice, forgetting injuries. That is a happy memory which forgets wrongs; yea, you must forget dearest relations, when standing in competition with Christ. And lastly, you must forget your duties, graces, and attainments, that you may "press forward"¶ to what is before. It is the saying of an ancient, that the remembrance of past virtue

* 2 Cor. v. 17. † Rev. xx. 6. John iii. 3. ‡ Rom. xii. 2.
‖ Liquidæ sunt puerorum memoriæ. § Psal. cxxxi. 2. ¶ Phil. iii. 13, 14.

is the ditch of the mind;* that is, when a man thinks to merit by it, or when it puts a stop to further progress. If you look back as Lot's wife did, you are not fit for the kingdom of God.

10. And lastly, rely on the Holy Spirit for strengthening memory. It is God's promise, it is Christ's purchase:† it must not be regarded as a cipher. You can do nothing without the Spirit's assistance: prize it, praise God for it, all good comes from it. The Holy Ghost makes ministers, overseers, to be your monitors. He indited the scriptures, works by the visible seals of the covenant, and surpasses all the phylacteries and other monitors of old: "Grieve not the Spirit,"‡ that would seal you; follow the Spirit's guidance, walk in it, be led by it, depend on his assistance, commit what you have to the Spirit of God, that he may bring it forth to you when you have most need.‖ But above all, plead the promise of the Spirit, which our Lord saith, shall abide with his people for ever. Say, Lord, I have a slippery, deceitful memory; it will hold piles of vanity, but it lets slip profitable truths. I have lost many a good sermon truth and impression, and left to myself, shall do again; I have neither ability nor will to lay up any thing carefully, nor lay out seasonably, unless thy Spirit help me. My soul is a leaking vessel, close the leaks, fill it with living water, keep it from running out; open my heart as thou didst Lydia's, to thy divine influence; write thy name and law there in indelible characters; forgive my forgetfulness; give me the art of remembrance; come in, Holy Spirit, do thine office in me and for me. O for a present memory! Thou, O God, hast promised thy Holy Spirit to them that ask him, I know neither how, nor what to pray for as I ought, let the Spirit help my infirmities: take not away thy Holy Spirit from me.§ When I am called before magistrates, let thy Spirit suggest to me what to answer: when I am assaulted with a temptation, or ready to step aside into sin, let thy Spirit be my monitor.

III. A further inquiry proposed, is, In what way the remembrance of their Creator may have influence upon the young, to promote practical godliness?

In answer to this inquiry, I shall briefly lay down the following considerations, which by the blessing of God may be of service to produce serious piety in young persons.

1. God created all things of nothing by the word of his power. This is an article of our faith, Heb. xi. 3, "Through

* Memoria virtutis, fovea mentis.—*Greg.* † John xiv. 26. ‖ Eph. iv. 30. ‖ Gal. v. 16. § Luke xi. 13. Rom. viii. 26. Psal. li. 10, 11.

faith we understand, that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." God had no matter to work upon, nor tools to work with; his own fiat produced all things out of the barren womb of non-entity, therefore I believe that God is omnipotent; to be believed on in his word, feared for his power, and trusted for his promises. I will with Abraham believe, "God who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were."* If God say the word who can contradict it? He is able to perform promises, and execute threatenings. He that made all things of nothing, can in a moment reduce me and all things to nothing; yea, can cast soul and body into hell. Who would not fear and tremble before this infinite Lord God? before whom all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing.† Our God is the true God—that hath made the earth by his power, established the world by his wisdom, and stretched out the heavens by his discretion. I will own no other God, but this world-making Jehovah.

2. God created man in his own image; Gen. i. 26, "And God said let us make man in our image after our own likeness." It is four times repeated in two verses, to show the certainty of the thing, and accuracy of the workmanship. O what a fine, pure, perfect, unspotted creature was man, when he came out of God's hand! He was able to do God's will, rule himself, and all the creatures: but "how art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" He was planted a noble vine, but is now a degenerate plant.‡ The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, are as earthen pitchers;"‖ such as were brought up in scarlet, embrace dunghills, we were God's Nazarites, "purer than snow, now our visage is blacker than a coal." O what a change! once God's glorious image was upon us, now the ugly image of the devil. Woe is me! O that this may humble me! the darling of heaven has now become the devil's slave; he who was Lord of the world is now degraded below the beasts of the field, I behold the fair estate that my ancestors once possessed, but by rebellion forfeited, and I am turned out. Woe is me!

3. God has created us capable of knowing, loving, serving, and enjoying himself. Man's body is "fearfully and wonderfully made, curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth."§ God made man of a better mould than the animal race. What an excellent production is man's body! Galen viewing thoroughly that little member, the eye, composed a hymn for the praise of

* Rom. iv. 17. † Matt. x. 28. Jer. v. 22. Deut. iv. 35.
‡ Isa. xiv. 12. Jer. ii. 21. ‖ Lam. iv. 2, 5, 7, 8. § Ps. cxxxix. 14, 15.

its creator. Some Creatures are abashed at the majestic countenance of man, but then what a masterpiece is the soul of man! upon which still remain some traits of God's image.* Even the meanest beggar and basest sinner, have impressions of God upon them more than brutes: for though the soul be depraved in its faculties, yet the substance thereof remains, it hath many excellent qualities. How capacious is the soul of man! It can pass through creation; it can consider the fabric, use, and beauty of animals; the signatures of plants, their nature and virtues; it can view the vast ocean, describe the sun's motions in the ecliptic; calculate tables for the moon and planets, and invent cycles for the computation of time, foretell future eclipses to the fraction of a digit; it can run backwards to a man's actions through many years; it can look forwards beyond death and the grave into another world; it can look inwards and dig into the hidden corners of the breast, where the vulture eye of another cannot pierce; yea, it can rise above the heavens to the being of God; for as Phidias carved his image so dexterously on the shield of Minerva, that it could never be taken out without breaking the whole to pieces, so there is some sense of a Deity in the worst of men. Therefore why should I not act like myself? Why do I not blow up those sparks of reason? O that I could show myself a man! Why may I not act rationally, though I cannot act spiritually without a new infused principle? A heathen could say, "I am greater, and born to greater things, than that my soul should be enslaved by my sensual appetites."† I will now act like a man; plants, beasts, and fishes act according to their kind, why should not I? I will go as far as I can, and see what grace will do.‡

4. God created man after his own image; therefore he, and he only, is able to repair this image in my soul. God's children are described, as being such as "put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him;" yea, "in righteousness and holiness of truth." Both texts say, the new man is created, which is the proper work of omnipotence. I find, "that in me dwells no good thing;"‖ that is, savingly good; and by nature, I am without strength, not able to work any good in my soul; yet, thou canst renew thine own image in me, thou hast even promised in the new covenant, "to put a new spirit within me." Lord, go again over thy work, which sin hath so marred and defaced; let me be thy "workmanship created in Christ Jesus to good

* James iii. 9.

† Major sum et ad majora natus quam ut sim mancipium corporis.—*Sen.*

‡ Ad ultimum virium. ‖ Col. iii. 10. Eph. iv. 24. Rom. vii. 18.

works." Thou hast said, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." O make all things new in my soul; "Create in me a clean heart;"* give me a new stock; let me have new habits of grace, that I may live a new life, aim at new ends, act by a new rule, and be formed for new privileges; for now "in Christ Jesus, that is, in this new testament dispensation, circumcision avails nothing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature:" either a new man, or no man in Christ. Lord, make me a new creature, that I may be a true Christian.

5. God created the human nature of Jesus Christ. He, he alone, "is the image of the invisible God," in a more peculiar manner than any man; "the first-born of every creature," "the beginning of the creation of God." The Holy Ghost formed the body of our Lord, in the womb of the virgin, and so divine power "created a new thing in the earth, a woman, to compass a man;" a virgin conceiving. Thus Christ is the highest branch of all terrestrial beings, the chief of our kindred, higher than all the kings of the earth, he that unites heaven and earth in a blessed conjugal bond. O that my soul were related to him! Would to God I were of the royal family of heaven, a partaker of Christ, and anointed with that precious ointment that runs down from the mystical Aaron's head to the skirts of his garment! As Christians are so called from this sacred unction, let me feel the benefit of this holy oil: "For both he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."† And will the Son of God call me brother? And may I through him call God, Father? This is the height of my ambition, this is the highest title of honour, the finest escutcheon that ever was blazoned. May I "be among the first-fruits of his creatures," by my new birth. Would to God, I were a branch of this "true vine," a member of his mystical "body of his flesh and of his bones."

6. God created man and all things with a dependance upon himself, not to be absolute, independent, or self-sufficient beings. Because we are his offspring, therefore "in him we live, move, and have our being;" "he upholds all things by the word of his power:"‡ Father and Son are still working. I do as necessarily depend on God for my being and well-being, as the beams on the sun, as the streams on the fountains. God forbid, then, that I should forsake God, my Maker. Shall I be so foolish and unwise, as thus to requite the Lord that made me, bought

* Ezek. xi. 19. xxxvi. 26. Eph. ii. 10. 2 Cor. v. 17. Psal. li. 10.
† Col. i. 15. Rev. iii. 14. Heb. iii. 14. Psal. cxxxiii. 2. Heb. ii. 11.
‡ James i. 18. John xv. 2. Eph. v. 30. Acts xvii. 28. Heb. i. 3.

me, and daily feeds me? Shall I kick against him that holds me in his hand; or run away from him, who is my life and the length of my days? Shall God nourish and bring me up, and shall I now rebel against him? Woe is me that ever I have sinned against so great, so good a God, and bountiful benefactor! "I have sinned, what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men?"* Now will I seek reconciliation with my sovereign, because my poor territories are nourished by the King of heaven's country, Acts xii. 20. I will now cast down my arms, and rebel no more; I will ask of him every morsel of bread, every portion of raiment: for "every good gift, and every perfect gift, cometh down from the Father of lights." I will expect all from him, and ask his leave to use my lawful comforts. Away with pride and conceit of self-sufficiency, that make any mortal men say, "We are lords, we will come no more unto thee." No, no, I will still go to God for all I want, and am sure I have daily wants; then let my trade with heaven be kept open for ever.

7. God created man and "all things for himself," Prov. xvi. 4; that is, for his own glory. It is true, God did not need his creatures, nor can any created being add to his essential glory; he is infinitely happy without us; but men must "speak of the glorious honour of his majesty, and declare his greatness." All his works praise him passively and objectively; men, as men, speak of his glory actively and declaratively; but saints bless God spiritually and acceptably. O that as other creatures glorify God in their kind, so may my soul be, and speak, in a due and regular manner, for God's glory. Lord, help me to attain this great end. As all the streams come originally from the sea, and return back thither; so let all the lines of my life, thoughts, affections, and actions, return to their centre. There are many obligations on me to be thine; I am not my own, I am made by thee, and for thee; I am "bought with a price," and therefore will glorify thee in body and soul, which are thine.† God forbid, that I should alienate any of thy goods to my proper use, and so commit sacrilege. In thy hand my breath is, and thine are all my ways; therefore thee will I glorify. Whether I eat, or drink, I will do all to thy glory. Of thee, and through thee, and to thee, are all things; "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."‡

* John v. 17. Deut. xxxii. 6. xxx. 20. Isa. i. 3. Job vii. 20.
† Jer. ii. 31. Psal. cxlv. 5, 6. Eccles. i. 7. 1 Cor. vi. 20.
‡ Dan. v. 23. 1 Cor. x. 31. Rom. xi. 36. Rev. iv. 11.

8. God created man, that he might worship and adore him, and him alone. This is his due by virtue of the law of creation; even the devil is bound to it as a creature: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." But the due manner of worshipping God is by institution. O that I could "serve the Lord with gladness," and "know that the Lord he is God; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." This relation to him, as my Creator, lays a great obligation on me to worship him; but I cannot worship acceptably, with reverence and godly fear, except I be in the relation of a child to a father. O make me a child of thine; give me the spirit of adoption to cry, "Abba, Father." Teach me to worship thee in spirit and in truth. Help me to cry like a child, my father, and not turn away from thee.* I will own no other God, than that God who made heaven and earth; yea, the same God that made me. "O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God." God forbid, I should fall down before the work of men's hands; God in Christ is the object of my worship; his glory is my end, together with the enjoyment of him; his word is my rule, and his Spirit, my assistant.

9. God made us, therefore we must daily, and especially at last, resign ourselves into his hands; whether we do or suffer, live or die. This is that excellent use the apostle makes of this doctrine: 1 Pet. iv. 19, "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator." You must look to your state as well as acts; for it is not pleading the relation of creatures only, for such are devils, and there is "a people of no understanding; therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour." Say not, he that made us will not consign us to destruction: can you think to serve Satan all your life, and be saved by God at death? With what confidence can sinners, when they have been the devil's drudges, commit themselves into God's hands? But God's children may say, with comfort, as David, as our dear Redeemer, and as the protomartyr Stephen: "Into thy hands I commit my spirit;"† and God will bid it welcome. You may commit your body to the grave, as a safe repository, and your soul into the hands of him who redeemed it, and say with blessed Paul: "I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he

* Matt. iv. 10. Psalm c. 2, 3. Gal. iv. 6. John iv. 24. Jer. iii. 19.
† Psal. xcv. 6, 7. Isa. xxvii. 11. Ps. xxxi. 5. Luke xxiii. 46. Acts vii. 59.

is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day," 2 Tim. i. 12.

10. God created man, and therefore when you are sore oppressed, with inward or outward troubles, fly to him for relief. Thus did Job, chap. x. 9, "Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay, and wilt thou bring me into dust again?" as if he had said, Alas, Lord, thou knowest full well the materials I am made of, even weak and corruptible ingredients; if thou handle me too hard, I shall faint under thy hand: "Are not my days few? cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little." * Dost thou not pity them that fear thee? "As a father pitieth his children,—so wilt thou, for thou knowest our frame, and rememberest that we are dust." Why then, Lord, dost thou crush me under the severe hand of avenging justice? Is my strength the strength of stones? or is my flesh of brass? Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro? and wilt thou pursue the dry stubble? † O lighten thine hand a little from me; give me some breathings, and intervals of mercy; but if thou lay one hand on me, put the other under me, to hold me up, and in due time to raise me.

11. God created all things good in their kind, therefore nothing is to be despised that God hath made; every thing is to be set in its proper place. At the close of every day, God saw that it was good, but the last day when he had made man, then it was very good; ‡ every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving. God forbid, that I should despise any part of God's workmanship; he is to be admired in the least and most contemptible creature, as it is God's work, for his work is honourable and glorious. The least insect speaks much of God, as well as the glorious sun: God is great in great things, and not small in the least. || Every tree, leaf, stone, and blade of grass, declares God's glorious attributes; visible things speak the eternal power of the glorious, invisible God. I may and must spell God's name in all: I will abuse none, lest I make the creatures groan under the burden of my sin and guilt. God forbid that I should despise any of my fellow-creatures for their natural defects: "Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us all?" Is not man, the humblest man, "the image and glory of God?" § Do not rich and poor meet together, and hath not God made both? Let no man despise another for his defects, either in corporeal or intellectual endowments; for God might have made thee so.

* Job x. 20. † Psal. ciii. 13, 14. Job xiii. 25. ‡ Gen. i. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 31.
|| Magnus in magnis, nec parvus in minimis. § Mal. ii. 10. 1 Cor. xi. 7.

Stoics were wont to say, that it was better to be a fool in human shape, than wise in the form of a brute.

12. I shall add but one thing more, which is this:—that if God be our Creator, he can (if need be) effect glorious things for his church and children. He hath not spent all his power in the first works of creation, in making this stupendous fabric of heaven and earth: he that hath done this, can do more. The same almighty power that spake the word, and all things were produced out of the barren womb of non-entity, can also command deliverance for Jacob. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth:" there needed no more than God's fiat for the producing of all created beings. This is that which has raised the hopes of God's fainting people, in the church's low estate: Psalm lxxiv. 16, 17, "The day is thine, the night also is thine: thou hast prepared the light and the sun. Thou hast set all the borders of the earth; thou hast made summer and winter:"—therefore thou canst easily deliver thy church by thine own power, when there is no ground of hope from outward means or ordinary instruments. If God's people be in apparent danger in their dwellings, God can "create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all, the glory shall be a defence." Nobody can injure God's children without his leave; for he "created the smith that bloweth the coals,—yea, the waster to destroy." None can lift up a hand or tool without him: "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I the Lord do all these things." If souls want peace, God saith, "I create the fruit of the lips—peace." * If your mercy be all gone, he can produce more; for he is the Father of mercies. If your comforts be run out, he can create new; for he is "the God of all comfort." He is never at a loss; his mercies are "new every morning," renewed every moment. He that made the sea can command it to be dry; he that made fire, can forbid it to burn; he can make a whale to secure Jonah in a storm, and place him safe on dry land; he can cause lions to forbear their fierceness, that they shall not hurt his Daniels. O who would not acknowledge and serve such a God; see Isa. xliii. 12. Let all persons, especially the young, be sure of a covenant relation to him, and act faith in all cases upon him.

The fourth head consists of the reasons why persons must remember their Creator, or be seriously religious, in the days of their youth.

* Isa. v. 5. liv. 16. xlv. 7, 8. lvii. 19.

The arguments I shall produce, shall be persuasive, as well as probative; drawn *ab æquo*, from its equity—*ab honesto*, from its honourable distinction—*à commodo*, from its advantage —*à periculo*, from the danger of neglecting it.

I. *Ab æquo*, from its equity: it is an equal, just, rational thing. Practical godliness is the most rational thing in the world; so saith the apostle Rom. xii. 1. The presenting of our bodies as a sacrifice to God, is called a "reasonable service;" it is most conformable to right reason, as,

1. It is most equitable, that the Supreme Being should have the choicest sacrifices devoted to him by all created beings. Those high intellectual spirits, the angels, are the chief, who are absolutely devoted to God. Next to them are rational beings, made a little lower than angels, and with respect to them, God deserves the very best of what they are or have. Now youth is, as it were, the male of the flock: Saul is called "a choice young man, and a goodly."* Surely such a one is fittest for God, who is worthy of the best men, best faculties, best time, and best days; for none is like unto him.

2. As God is our Creator, so it is equitable that he should have the best, the flower, cream, and quintessence of our time: this is the argument in the text, considered already. If a man make an instrument for his own use and service, it is fit he should have the best thereof. God made us for himself, O let him not have the devil's leavings! Ingenuousness should move you to gratify God your maker, proprietor, governor, and benefactor, with the first-fruits of your time, thoughts, and actions.

3. Jesus Christ redeemed the young. The promise is to believers and their seed: and if they be within the covenant, no doubt but they are redeemed. "Suffer little children," saith our Lord, "to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of God." If you be bought with a price, you are "not your own;" therefore must you "glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are his."† If he bought you, you should be devoted to him betimes. Christ made haste into the world, he made haste to the cross to suffer for you; therefore you should make haste to devote yourselves to him: this is very reasonable. See Rom. xiv. 7—9. 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

4. It is very equitable, because you were devoted to God from your infancy. Your parents presented you to him in baptism; wherein you were dedicated to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, which was an enlisting of you as soldiers under his banner, when bounty-money was taken for you to fight his battles, and you were brought under allegiance to the King of hea-

* 1 Sam. ix. 2. † 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

ven. Now turn not your backs upon him, but enter immediately into his service, and you shall have present pay. It is perjury, yea sacrilege, to renounce your baptism. Now make good what your parents promised on your behalf, be really holy, as you are federally holy. O for a nature according to your name! Look after internal, spiritual baptism, as well as that of water. You must be born again "of water and of the Spirit." It is most reasonable that you answer the whole of this ordinance: water on your face will do you no good, without grace in your hearts.

II. An argument is fetched *ab honesto*, from the honourable distinction, respectability, and acceptableness of it.

1. Youth is most acceptable to God. It is observed, that in the Old Testament, God frequently chose the younger brethren: as Abel, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Ephraim, and David; for God delights in the young. A German divine saith: "God loves to be taken hold of by little hands." Dr. Andrews saith: "The children's hosannahs were as delightful melody in our Lord's ears, as men's hallelujahs." Jesus loved his youngest disciple, John, best: and will not you seek to be most acceptable to our gracious God?

2. It is most desirable among men. Who will choose an old man for a servant? In Scripture, all persons that were fit to keep servants, had young men to wait on them. Abraham "took two of his young men with him:" this implies that most of his servants were young. They were young men that waited on David, Elisha, Boaz, and Jonathan: * and God tells Israel, that their king will take their "goodliest young men for his work," 1 Sam. viii. 16. Nebuchadnezzar chose out of the captives, "children in whom was no blemish, well favoured,—to stand in the king's palace."† Yea, it was so essential to a servant to be young, that, in the Hebrew, a lad and servant are expressed by the same word: and is it not decent, and very becoming that God should have young men to stand in his courts? this is an amiable sight indeed.

3. For young persons to be in God's service is a kind of honour and ornament. It is a young person's honour to be religious: this is a sparkling diamond in a gold ring. Youth is the golden age: grace is a precious pearl: and what greater preferment can a young gentleman have than to attend his prince? "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable," saith God. "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour," ‡ saith Solomon. Yea, this also reflects credit on religion. O what a noble sight was it, to see

* Gen. xxii. 3. 1 Sam. xxi. 4. Ruth ii. 9. † Dan. i. 3, 4.
‡ Isa. xliii. 4. Prov. xii. 26.

that brave company of two hundred and thirty-two in Ahab's army, that were "young men of the princes of the provinces," into whose hand God gave all the Syrian host. What a glorious appearance of divine power was it, to see little, young, ruddy David, return with the giant's head in his hand: it was a credit to the cause to see such a conqueror. * Youth may be considered the sinews and ornament of a nation; young men are the beauty of our assemblies; "Children's children are the crown of old men."† O give honour to the "Ancient of days," by attending his royal throne in the prime of your age: honour the Lord with your first-fruits.

4. It is honourable, or of good report, among the saints and churches, to see young persons own God and his ways. The apostle saith, "Provide things honest in the sight of all men:" yea, saith he, "providing for honest things in the sight of the Lord:" ‡ I pray God that ye do that which is honest. Now honest dealing, in these places, imports being irreprehensible, and unreprovable; not obnoxious to censures either of God or man: scandalize none, nor give any just offence, but allure others by your good example. O what a lovely thing is this in young men! To walk so justly, holily, and friendly to all, as to recommend godliness to others, and give them an occasion to glorify God, embrace, and run hand in hand with them in the way to heaven; that old men may be ashamed to be outstript in virtue by young people, and may be provoked by a holy emulation to haste after them. What an excellent thing it is, to see young men "blameless, and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, shining as lights in the world," Phil. ii. 15.

III. The next head of argument is drawn *à commodo*, from the advantage of being religious, and devoted to God in early life. There is a fourfold advantage in being religious in youth.

1. In younger days, persons are more pliable, and gentle, and more easily wrought upon, than when grown up. Take a piece of clay, fresh and newly brought out of the pit, it is more easily prepared for use and moulded, than when it is hardened by the sun: tender-hearted youth is more easily cast in a mould and stamped with new impressions than afterwards. If you take a young willow betimes, you may sooner bend it than when it is grown up:

> Flexilis est juncus, salices flectuntur amaræ:
> Robora dura, minus.———

Some have observed, that young persons have good feelings,

* 1 Kings xx. 14, 15. 1 Sam. xvii. 33, 57. † Prov. xvii. 6.
‡ Rom. xii. 17. 2 Cor. viii. 21.

many convictions, and if they wear out these, they are more rarely wrought upon. They take notice that betwixt the ages of fifteen and twenty, usually sinners are converted; if they pass the flower of this age, it is doubtful whether ever their souls be espoused to Jesus Christ. There are (*candida tempora*) fit and proper seasons for God's working; miss them, and you miss for ever. Who knows but this is "the accepted time," your "day of salvation?"* God's Spirit will not always strive. Esau outlived his day, so may you; and woe be to you if your day of grace be past and gone.

2. What you get in your younger days will make more durable impression on your spirit. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it," Prov. xxii. 6. We see by experience the strength of education. What persons learn in childhood, grows up with them, and becomes a second nature: a vessel seasoned with any thing new will savour of it long after: if cloth be first dyed in the wool, it holds its colour. When David would have his countrymen skilful, he bade them teach the children the use of the bow:† they prove the best artists that learn their trade young. Thus it is in matters of religion: none are such experienced Christians, as they that set out young; these are they that are best acquainted with the mysteries of grace, the methods of Satan, the danger of sin, the deceits of the heart; these have been long trained up in Christ's school, and have got a holy custom of gracious practices, a habit has been thus acquired, by reason of use they have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.‡

3. The scriptures distinguish with a high emphasis and encomium, such persons of all degrees, as have been religious in youth. It is very observable what an eminent character God gives of several young persons: the Holy Ghost noting not only their piety, but the age in which their piety manifested itself:—Isaac and Joseph were young patriarchs—Joshua and David, young commanders—Samson and Gideon, young judges—Solomon and Josiah, young kings—Mephibosheth and Abijah, young princes—Chimham and Obadiah, young courtiers—Samuel, Daniel, and Jeremiah, young prophets—Elisha and Baruch, pious attendants on aged prophets—Elihu and Heman, amongst the wise men—Paul and John, young among the apostles—Timothy and Titus, young evangelists—Ruth and Anna, young widows eminent for piety—Philip's daughters, prophetesses, who were virgins: and many more, husbands, wives, children, servants, rich and poor might be produced; and they

* 2 Cor. vi. 2. † 2 Sam. i. 18. ‡ Heb. v. 14.

proved most eminent in their advanced age, who remembered God most affectionately in their youth. Behold a cloud of witnesses, go ye and do likewise: "Do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem," Ruth iv. 11.

4. The remembering and acknowledging of God in youth, will be great satisfaction in old age. O what joy will reflection upon youthful piety yield! Even Seneca a heathen could say, "youth well spent is the greatest comfort of old age."* David could confidently plead with God for deliverance out of the hand of the wicked, "For," saith he, "thou art my hope, O Lord God, thou art my trust from my youth," Psal. lxxi. 5, 6. Then he could plead with confidence, "Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth," ver. 9; see also ver. 17, 18. An ingenuous master, will not turn off a superannuated servant. When the proconsul bade Polycarp deny Christ and swear by the emperor, he answered, 'I have served Christ these eighty-six years, and he hath not once injured me, and shall I now deny him?' Jacob could say, "God hath fed me all my life long unto this day;"† he hath been kind to me all my days, and I trust he will look to me even to the end; and shall I now turn my back on him? Whither can I go to mend myself for a master? "Thou only hast the words of eternal life."‡ He that hath been the stay of my youth, will be the staff of my age? I dare venture my soul upon his promise, who hath hitherto maintained me by his providence. "In the days of my youth, the secret of God was upon my tabernacle, his candle did shine upon my head, and by his light I walked through darkness;" and though now "the sun, and the light, and moon and stars be darkened," in this my natural horizon, yet "the Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?" "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me."‖ I have abundant experience of his grace and presence. O the days of mercy I have had many years ago! A good man said, "I got that in my youth, which I would not for all the world have to get now."

IV. The last head of arguments is fetched, *à periculo*, from the danger of neglecting to remember our Creator in the days of our youth. There is a twofold danger to which young persons are exposed.

First, Young persons, more than others, have many difficulties to break through, that they may sincerely be religious and duly think of God. I shall hint at a few:

* Optimum senectutis solatium, bene transacta juventus. † Gen. xlviii. 15.
‡ John vi. 68. ‖ Job xxix. 4. Eccl. xii. 2. Psal. xxvii. 1. xxiii. 4.

1. Original sin begins working betimes. Man is not an unblotted paper, *rasa tabula*, that you may write what you will on, as Aristotle dreamed; nor doth he learn evil by example only, as Socinus maintained; but "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth:" yea, wicked and estranged from the womb; "he goes astray as soon as he is born speaking lies." "Vain man would be wise, though he be born like the wild ass's colt."* This root sprouts early; this spring diffuseth itself in many streams, and soon overflows all the banks, and breaks the bounds of modesty; so that without the grace of God restraining or renewing, it is not to tell what a height of shamelessness in sinning young men may arrive at, as Newgate and Tyburn have testified. You need the antidote of grace, to guard you from this infectious disease.

2. The nature and character of youth, call for this more than at any other period of life; it is an age exposed to many falls and slips. Of its own nature it is a light, trifling, and inconstant age, and therefore needs the counterbalance of grace; it is quickly hurried away with wind and tide, and hence ballast is necessary. Youth is a slippery, glassy age, as the word used Psal. cxix. 9, signifies; it is like quicksilver, and therefore requires the grace of God to settle and establish it. It is a fervid age, so the Greek word for youth imports, and has occasion for a cooler to quench the flame of passion. It is a dark age, and so the word signifies Eccl. xi. 10; therefore wants light, both within and without, to guide it into and in the way of truth. Methinks a young man setting out in the world without grace, is as a ship proceeding to sea without pilot, victualling, masts, or rigging, which lies at the mercy of the winds and waves, and is quickly split on rocks, or driven on sands.

3. The temptations with which youth is assailed from Satan, vain company, &c. make this duty most necessary. The devil and his instruments do what they can to deprave and pervert youth. It is recorded of a philosopher, that he had spent forty years to corrupt youth. They say, "Cast in thy lot among us, let us all have one purse." O what insinuating tricks of legerdemain have sinners! As it is said of the harlot, "With her much fair speech, she causeth him (that is, the young man) to yield; with the flattering of her lips, she forced him."† They must be devoutly churlish that can resist her rhetoric. Satan and his agents, lay their strongest siege against virgin souls; their main design is to corrupt and poison these springs. Thus swindlers entangle a young heir in their gambling scenes; drunkards study to debauch youth, and, when they have done

* Gen. viii. 21. Psal. lviii. 3. Job xi. 12. † Prov. i. 14. vii. 21.

it, glory in the conquest and accomplishment of their enterprize: and many times it is an easy victory. Youth is tinder, to catch sparks of temptation: you need a cover for the barrel of gunpowder. O what necessity of a fence, to keep off such bold intruders! That fence is the fear of the Lord, the remembrance of our Creator.

4. The ingenious and wily shifts and excuses, which young persons are apt to invent for the purpose of resisting, or at least, delaying this great concern, make the minding of our Creator more necessary. It cannot be told what strange reasonings are framed in the witty heads and wicked hearts of young people, to evade plain duty. Tush, say they, youth will have its fling. I must sow my wild oats. Would you have young people like old, sage, grave persons? That would be ridiculous. I have all the world before me, I have room enough to mend, I hope to be better in a little time; sudden changes are dangerous, I am not so far gone yet, but I may be better. Have not old people had their youthful frolics? Such an honest man was but so and so, when he was young. Many an unhappy lad makes a good man, and many a sober, stayed youth hath fallen into intemperance in old age; as the proverb is, young saint—old devil. There are many demure youths that pretend piety, but they are no better than their neighbours. I am no hypocrite, I am what I seem, I scorn to seem one thing and be another, as I see some do. Such language as this, the devil and a wicked heart invent, to gull and beguile young men. The Lord open their eyes to see the fallaciousness of this arguing. Will this language be approved at the great day? Is this suitable to God's word, by which thou must be judged? Canst thou not answer this thyself? Wilt thou stand by it in a sober mood? There is nothing more common amongst libertine youths, than thus to evade good counsel, and harden themselves in sin: but the remembrance of God in youth will abundantly answer all these vain cavils, and prevail against these apologies. This is a great difficulty which young men have to encounter, which will put them hard to it, and nothing but serious godliness can be effectual for its counteraction.

Secondly, As young men have many difficulties in their way, they are also in apparent hazard, if they do not sincerely remember their Creator. For consider,

1. You grow worse and harder daily. Your minds are more corrupt, your wills more obstinate, your consciences more callous, (it is well if they do not become seared,) and your affections more extravagant. Every act of sin strengthens the

habit: custom in sin takes away conscience, and the disease may grow invincible: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."* A callous hardness grows on the foot with much travelling. Sin will grow bold, and stupidity seizes gradually on all the faculties. Repentance becomes daily more difficult: he that will not repent to-day, will be less inclined to-morrow.† Disuse to holy exercises makes them appear a harder service; the further you go in sin, the greater space you have to return back; you are daily making yourselves work. Who would ravel yarn, which they must unravel again with more trouble? God Almighty awake your spirits.

2. You daily grieve the hearts of your parents and pious relations, and that is a grieving of the Spirit of God: they pray for you, counsel, admonish, and endeavour to persuade you; they weep over you, and cannot prevail; if ever you repent, these pains they take will be as stings in your souls, to wound you with remorse; if you do not, they will be as faggots to scorch you with flames of everlasting fire, and your parents will be brought in as evidence against you, yea, your dearest friends on earth will approve the execution of justice. I have heard of a tender-hearted, indulgent mother, that had a dissolute son; being greatly afflicted with some outrageous villany which he had committed, she spoke thus to him: "Ah, my poor graceless son, thou hast been a great grief of heart to me, but the day is coming, when I shall triumph in vengeance being executed for ever upon thy forlorn soul." This was spoken with so much earnestness by a mother, of whose strong affection he had so much experience, that it wrought trembling in his spirit, and from that time he became a new man. Oh that this were considered of! a day of reckoning is coming, wherein the recollection of parents' groans will produce horror.

3. You are daily losing a world of comfort, and heaping up sin, guilt, and shame, for future time. Little do you know what sweetness you fail of enjoying in the ways of God; for "wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and her paths are peace."‡ This made the convert Augustine cry out, Too late have I loved thee, O Lord, too late have I loved thee.‖ O what a pity it is to have lost that pleasure I might have had in this course! On the contrary, you are daily treasuring up wrath by filling your souls with guilt; and I will assure you, the sad remembrance of youthful vanities will fill your souls with bitter grief. Oh the worm of conscience you are feeding,

* Jer. xiii. 23.
† Qui non vult hodie, cras minus aptus erit.
‡ Prov. iii. 17.
‖ Serò te amavi, Domine, serò te amavi.

the sting that you are preparing! That will be a dreadful day, when you shall be forced to possess the iniquities of your youth; yea, when your very bones will be full of the sins of your youth: old strains will now be felt to purpose. Youthful sins cause fearful pangs in decrepid old age. Preventing physic is better than that which cures; for in the latter there is more pain and hazard. What madmen are they that make wounds in their flesh, (like mountebanks) to try the sovereignty of their balsam! Surely such experience is the mistress of fools, especially since it is a great hazard whether you will repent or not, for it is a great peradventure, whether God will give you repentance. * Oh therefore defer not application another day.

4. Your day is passing away apace: you are dying creatures. There is a time to be born, and a time to die: the time of life is not worth reckoning on, we quickly rise, then fall. Man cometh forth as a flower, and is cut down; in the morning it flourisheth and groweth up, in the evening it is cut down and withereth: no mention made of noon: thousands drop away in their minority or youth, and never arrive at old age. Your times are in God's hands, not in yours :† how quickly can God spurn you off the stage of this world, and lay you in the silent dust: you may never arrive at old age. What you do, do quickly: to-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts: now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation: oh that you knew the day of your visitation! seek him while he may be found, call upon him while he is near: ‡ put not God off any longer: give him the prime of your days. let the time past of your lives suffice to have wrought the will of the flesh:‖ you have time little enough behind, yea, less probably than you are aware of; if you reckon on many years to come, God may say, Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee. § You build castles in the air, if you imagine you shall certainly come to old age. But suppose you should live to old age, the words of my text describe it as consisting of evil days and years, when you shall say, I have no pleasure in them. It is a pity the best of your days should be spent in the devil's drudgery, and that God should be put off with your tottering age, as if you should keep your horses idle in the days of their strength, and begin to use them when lame and enfeebled with years; or keep your garments till old and moth-eaten, and then begin to wear them; or keep your meat till it be spoiled and fit to cast to dogs, and then think of using it. Alas! sirs, old

* 2 Tim. ii. 25.
† Job xiv. 2. Psalm xc. 6. xxxi. 15.
‡ Psalm xcv. 7, 8. 2 Cor. vi. 2. Luke xix. 42, 44. Isa. lv. 6, 7.
‖ 1 Pet. iv. 3, 4.
§ Luke xii. 20.

age is an unfit time to commence the great affairs of repentance, faith, humiliation for sin, and mortification of sin; at least, it will be late to seek them, when you should have the benefit of them; that will be a time of spending, not of getting grace. You will find it hard to exercise grace in this evil time of old age or sickness. Evil days these are called, because they bring many troubles with them; they form the winter of life, for it is a frozen, stormy season, and will exhaust all that was gotten in the summer of youth. When infirmities bend thy back, do not keep thine iniquities to break it: how canst thou get thy eyes opened to see spiritual objects, when the sun of thy reason is darkened? Alas, what a dull scholar wilt thou be, when thou hast lost the light of perspicacity, the moon of thy memory, the stars of thy judgment and fancy! What comfort canst thou take in gaining knowledge, when thou hast no joy of thy life? Alas! the severe usurer, death, will exact for loan some part or other of thy goods, a sense, one day—a limb, another, so that thou shalt be forced to die daily to nature, who wouldst not die spiritually to sin. How canst thou keep thyself, when the keepers of thy house tremble? A benumbing palsy seizing on thy hands and arms,—how wilt thou go upright in the ways of God, when thy legs and thighs falter and shrink under the weight of guilt, and the strong men bow themselves? How canst thou eat thy spiritual meat, when the grinders cease, and thy appetite is decayed? O trust not in an arm of flesh, but see to it, that everlasting arms be under you; get an interest in the favour of that God, who is eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, support to the fainting. O learn to pray: embrace and profess Christ, before the doors be shut in the streets, and you be quite unhinged, so that your lips cannot readily do their office in shewing forth God's praise. Your hearing will grow defective; the very chirping of birds will be a disturbance, and you will take little delight in the most pleasant music. O young men, then, open all the doors of your hearts to let in Christ, that in old age he may be with you; when appetite fails, he will sup with you, and you with him; when sleep faileth, he will be rest to your souls; when you can take no satisfaction in any thing, a good conscience will be a continual feast, this will furnish songs in the night;* instead of fears in the way, or fearing what is high falling, you shall have a guard of angels, no occasion of stumbling, and walk in your way safely.† And when the almond-tree flourisheth, your gray hairs shall be a crown of glory, being found in the way of righteous-

* Rev. iii. 20. Psal. cxvi. 7. Prov. xv. 15. Job xxxv. 10.
† Psal. xci. 11. 1 John ii. 10. Prov. iii. 23—26.

ness; when the grasshopper is a burden, God will ease you of the burden of guilt, the greatest evil; when natural desires fail, your spiritual desires shall be strong, and your last shall be more than your first.

Thus I have despatched the doctrinal part of this subject, which being practical, I shall have less need to enlarge in the application.

First, This subject is calculated to produce conviction and lamentation,

1. In them that oppose and discourage the young when they become seriously disposed, by doing what they can to hinder them from remembering their Creator. What! (say some who have become old,) must we have these green-heads old before their time? what a noise do these raw lads make about religion! they may have a good intention, but are rash and simple, forward and giddy-headed, and run before their betters: what! will they condemn all others? shall we be accounted by them old, doting fools? we are sure of *their* folly. I like not this hasty forwardness, saith one, soon ripe, soon rotten, young saint, old devil, this is but a flash, they will soon become sober on it; yea, they will tire and fag presently, nothing violent is permanent; I have seen many as forward in setting out, but they have soon become jaded and turned back. However, saith another, I love not to see young people like old folks, meddling with matters too high for them; such studies will crack their brains, make them melancholy or mad, it dulls their spirits, so that they will never make any figure, but are always poring over a book; I love to see young men sprightly and active. Thus some parents and masters discourage their children and servants from the duty recommended in the passage under consideration; and drive them from God, doing what they can to make them Satan's slaves, and more children of wrath than they were by nature. Some even take bibles and good books out of their children's hands, and put into their hands romances and plays. Ah cruel parents! ah wicked masters, tutors, and governors! either you dispirit them and drive them from God, or you do not; if you do, will it be any comfort to you to have them call for vengeance upon you in hell? Surely the sight of them in that devouring fire will not relieve but torment you, when you reflect on yourselves as instruments to drag or drive them thither. Oh merciless parents! that are reluctant to have your children happy, and rejoice to see them miserable!—But if you do not discourage them, or keep them from God and his ways, will they not still be witnesses against you? how could you bear their challenges? and what will become of

you, when their sighs and groans will rise up in judgment against you? yea, and will it not be an overwhelming sight to perceive those whom you have disregarded, sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and yourselves, the children of the kingdom, church members perhaps, shut out into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth?* that is, at your own egregious folly, which would neither enter in yourselves, nor suffer them to enter, if you could have hindered them; your case is very dreadful, for,

(1.) You are of the spirit of the chief priests, who hearing the children cry in the temple, Hosanna to the Son of David, were sore displeased, and would have had their mouths shut; or of Festus's spirit who said to Paul, "much learning doth make thee mad."†

(2.) Do not you bring upon yourselves by offending one of these little ones that believe in Christ, that terrible woe, "it were better that a millstone were hanged about your neck, and you drowned in the depth of the sea?"‡

(3.) Do not you act the devil's part, and become as he is, accusers of the brethren, and opposers of true godliness?

(4.) Do not you come near the unpardonable sin, that blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which shall never be forgiven? I say not, you have committed it, but you are in the high road to it, when you oppose the known truth, and your consciences cannot but bear witness against you that these young people are better than yourselves, and therefore you dislike them and say, they make themselves singular. Well, so must a child of God be: what do you more than others, saith our Saviour, or what singular thing do ye? You say, but they are more precise than wise. I answer, they are commanded to walk circumspectly or accurately.‖ You say, but they are gloomy, we would have them merry. I answer, but God would have them go to the house of mourning, and tells us, some sorrow is better than laughter;§ for by the sadness of the countenance, the heart is made better: besides, they have a more solid joy, than your giggling laughter. If you say, you love not to see the young so sober and grave; I say, in that you are contrary to God, who saith, young men exhort to be sober-minded; if you say, they will soon have done; I answer, how know you that? If it be of God you cannot overthrow it, and perhaps you may be found, even to fight against God;¶ be it known unto you, that saving grace is not a mere flash of zeal, but an abiding principle, which God is engaged to maintain, and we may be

* Matt. viii. 11, 12. † Matt. xxi. 15, 16. Acts xxvi. 24. ‡ Matt. xviii. 6.
‖ Matt. v. 47. Ephes. v. 15. § Eccles. vii. 2—4. ¶ Tit. ii. 6. Acts v. 39.

confident of this very thing, that "he that hath begun a good work in them will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ," Phil. i. 6.

2. This consideration falls heavily on dissolute and profligate young men. Alas, for the carnal youth of our assemblies! All men come into this world with their backs turned upon God; the wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies;* and till converting grace change their hearts, they will wander all their days, and perish at last: most part of their time is spent before they know where they are, or what they came into the world for. Poor creatures get hold of sin, and draw it with cords of vanity, and are held fast with the cords of their own iniquity;† yea, which is worse, some slide back by a perpetual backsliding, they hold fast deceit and refuse to return. How careless are most young persons! there are many sins peculiar to youth, as *ignorance*, "we were but of yesterday, and know nothing," Job viii. 9.—*inconsiderate rashness*, Simeon and Levi, Gen. xxxiv. 25.—*envy*, Joshua, a young man said, "My lord Moses, forbid them," Numb. xi. 28.—*pride*, "the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient," Isa. iii. 5.—*ambition*, Absalom and Adonijah—*error*, Judges xvii. 11, 12.—*prodigality*, Luke xv.—*sensuality*, Shechem, Amnon, and the prodigal—*inconstancy*, Eph. iv. 14, "children tossed to and fro"—*obstinacy*, Eli's sons "hearkened not to the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them," 1 Sam. ii. 25. These and many others are the sins of young people, to which they are most inclined, and into which they are most apt to run, except restraining or renewing grace change or stop them. And O how easily are the young overtaken with sin! for they cannot foresee the consequences thereof, nor keep out of the ways of transgression; they are even apt to presume on a long day for repentance; as children, they cannot refuse the evil, and choose the good; as children, they are unskilful in the word of righteousness, and very ignorant, and therefore Paul saith, "While I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child."‡ Youth, which is the next step from childhood, is oft little better, sometimes much worse. O how many errors are there in this second paragraph of life! God Almighty humble your hearts under them, and teach you to avoid them. Even sanctified young men may slip into sin: though Timothy was a picture of mortification, yet Paul thinks it needful to say, "Flee youthful lusts."‖ There are some lusts that dog youth

* Psalm lviii. 3. † Isa. v. 18. Prov. v. 22.
‡ Isa. vii. 15. Heb. v. 14. 1 Cor. xiii. 11. ‖ 2 Tim. ii. 22.

at the heels more than at any other age. Oh how many young men run into extravagancies in these days; could I speak or write to our volatile youth, I would ask these questions:—

(1.) Can you think your jovial days will always last? No, no; the wise man makes an ironical concession: Eccles. xi. 9, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart and in the sight of thine eyes." O brave, saith the vain young man, this I would be at, this merry life I like well, I will cast away cares and sing away sorrows, this will be delightful: but hark, youth, after revelling comes a doleful reckoning, read on: "But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." Thou must pay dear for this folly, God will not let thee go scot-free, thy sweet meat must have sour sauce, thy pleasant cups will be succeeded by exposure to fire and brimstone, thy unseemly laughter will be echoed with gnashing of teeth: "woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep,"* saith truth itself: your wild oats will prove to have a sad harvest—if you sow the wind, you will reap the whirlwind. Prodigality ends in penary, the prodigal son would be glad of husks with swine; the rich glutton's sumptuous fare was followed with the want of a drop of water to cool his tongue.†

(2.) May you not shorten your days by your own folly and frolics? How many have by sin cut off themselves from the land of the living? Jehu's chariot is soon broken to pieces: the sun of young gallants soon sets. There is a promise of long life to such as obey God's commands, and a threatening that evil doers shall be cut off; they shall be as the fat of lambs, consuming in smoke.‡ Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days, that is, which they might have lived according to the course of nature, or which they promised to themselves. God threatens old Eli's sinning posterity, that they shall die in the flower of their age: this is a sore judgment. The Hebrews call immature death (כרת, excidium) a slaughter, when men die betwixt 20 and 60, or as some say, before they reach 30. Oh how many have gone off the stage before that time! How many young men have we seen waste their spirits by lewd practices, and exhaust their radical moisture by excess and intemperance, that might have lived longer if they had sinned less. "Be not over-much wicked," saith the wise man, "neither be thou foolish: why shouldst thou die before thy time?"‖ not that he would connive at a moderation in sinning, for all sin is an excess; but let not loose the reins to licentiousness,

* Luke vi. 25. † Luke xv. 16. xvi. 19, 24.
‡ Psalm xxxvii. 20. ‖ 1 Sam. ii. 33. Eccles. vii. 16.

because "a wicked man may prolong his life in his wickedness," for thou mayest accelerate death by sin, and dig thine own grave. Oh how many have stabbed themselves to the heart! and cut their own throats! a felo-de-se that should be staked through and buried in a cross way, as a token of perpetual infamy; but our young gallants are honourably interred with a funeral encomium, though they were self-murderers: but God judgeth righteously, and amongst good men these fond youngsters will be branded with folly; they are the devil's martyrs, and would rather ride post to hell, than creep on their knees to heaven. God Almighty pity these forlorn creatures that have no pity on themselves, either souls or bodies. What, if one should say to you what formed the posey of a ring, as it is said, given to a vain young knight, "Drink and die," to whom it happened accordingly, would not this daunt you? What, if it be said, the next time thou art guilty of lewdness, thou shalt be taken like Zimri and Cosbi, and thrust through, wouldst thou hazard such a termination of life? What, if the next time thou swearest, or tellest a lie, or takest God's name in vain, thou be struck down dead, would not this affright thee? But how many astonishing instances hast thou before thine eyes, of the woful death of profligate youths? and will nothing prevail? Remember Prov. xxix. 1, "He that being often reproved, and hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

(3.) Are you too strong for God to deal with? God can tame the wildest prodigal: he hath a long arm to reach you, a strong arm to conquer you. You can deal well enough with ministers, parents, christian friends, or even magistrates that should punish you, either you can dissemble before them, or outrun them, or hector them down; but "can thy heart endure, or can thy hands be strong in the day that God shall deal with thee?" the Lord has spoken it, and he will do it. "He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?" "Do men provoke the Lord to jealousy? are they stronger than he?"* Where is aspiring Nimrod, or stubborn Pharaoh, or vain Nebuchadnezzar, or ambitious Herod, or cruel Nero, or daring Julian? What is become of the persecuting emperors or usurping tyrants, that would needs pull God out of his throne, and mount into it themselves? Their bodies are in the silent dust, and their souls amidst the torments of hell. The scripture saith, "They are gone down to hell with their weapons of war; they have laid their swords under their heads, but their iniquities are upon their bones, though they were the

* Ezek. xxii. 14. Job ix. 4. 1 Cor. x. 22.

terror of the mighty in the land of the living." I may say as the Lord saith to Nineveh, "Art thou better than populous No?"* or art thou more rich than Crœsus? or more potent than Xerxes with an army of a million of men? or more resolute than Alexander, Cæsar, or Pompey? Alas, "what can you do in the day of visitation, or in the desolation that shall come from far? to whom will you flee for help? and where will you leave your glory?"† How soon can the infinite God crush such worms under his foot, and spurn you to the abodes of misery? you are no adequate matches for the omnipotent God.

(4.) May not your hearts or God's ear be shut? so that either you cannot repent, or God will not accept your repentance. Alas, sirs, your hearts are every day hardening like the hoof of an animal with travelling; you are as a smith's iron under the hammer, every blow increases its hardness, or as the high way padded hard with treading on it. Your hearts are every day hardening through the deceitfulness of sin; if you will not repent to-day, you will be less inclined to-morrow; "to-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts;"‡ as if it were said, if ever you intend to comply with God's mind, oh do it now, or else your hearts will be more hardened to your ruin, or God's ear may be turned from you; he may say, "Because I have called, and ye refused,—you shall call upon me, but I will not answer; you shall seek me early, but shall not find me." He gave you space to repent, and you repented not; therefore he may justly leave you in a bed of security, or cast you into a bed of calamity. || God gives repentance, and if you have long neglected his grace, he may cease striving with you, and woe unto you when he departs from you: you may outlive your day, and oh the doleful case of such as have spent their day of grace! Study Esau's case, Heb. xii. 17, "For ye know, how that afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, (in the margin, no way to change his mind, his father's mind,) though he sought it carefully with tears." O distressing state, miserable condition! The door may be shut, the portcullis let down, the gulf fixed, and your souls irrecoverably lost, and then woe be to you.

3. This conviction will fall heavily on some parents, masters, tutors, or guardians, who have the charge of educating youth, who do not put them in mind of this duty, to remember their Creator. Alas, this is for a lamentation; young striplings marry wives, and have children, before they are qualified to teach them any thing but childish toys, games, sports, and

* Ezek. xxxii. 27. Nahum iii. 8. † Isa. x. 3.
‡ Heb. iii. 13. Psalm xcv. 7, 8. || Prov. i. 24—28. Rev. ii. 21, 22.

so become childish playfellows, rather than grave parents, or gracious patterns of their poor offspring. O miserable church, that have no fitter persons to instruct others, than such as want instruction themselves! In the primitive church, such persons were kept among the catechumens, to be trained up for God in the essentials of the christian religion; but now children are as princes, and babes rule over some families, if not in age, yet in knowledge: * this is a judgment, and the hidden, unseen cause of many open abominations, and much horrible atheism. If the gardener neglect his garden, weeds will spring up: vice needs not to be planted, the soil is fruitful enough in the wild fruits of darkness: if men neglect to sow good seed, the devil will not fail to sow tares. Oh what numerous instances have we of the sad fruit of neglected education! simple ignorance in youth, becomes affected ignorance in age; blushing sins in children, if not corrected, become impudent sins in age; brutish children become diabolists.† Oh what a cutting wound that must be to a father's heart, whose son's life tells his conscience, what a graceless son once spake in words to his guilty father, "If I have done evil, I have learnt it of you."‡ Consider,

(1.) You have been instruments to give your children a miserable existence. Alas, they were born blind, they are the devil's slaves, children of wrath by nature, and though you cannot make them good, why will you not lament over them, and endeavour after their good?

(2.) You have them in their tender years, wherein you have more advantage over them. Men prune plants, break horses, train up hawks to the lure, when young; irrational creatures feed their young till they can seize prey on their own wing; if you do not the like, you are more irrational, you miss your season.

(3.) They will take more notice of you than others. Your authority over them, will add an emphasis to your admonitions: children have a natural reverence for parents. Men are very tenacious of that which is (*πατροπάράδοτον*) delivered to them by their parents. Let cloth be dyed in wool, not in the web, the colour will be more lively and durable. How apt will children be to say, The minister speaks out of spleen, and what has he to do with me? but they have experience of parents' affection, and know their authority, and will more easily submit. O why should you lose these golden hours?

(4.) How unlike are you to the pious parents in scripture? all the patriarchs of old taught their families. Abraham would command his children and household to keep God's ways. Joshua resolves that he and his house would serve God. Solo-

* Isa. iii. 4. † Job xxx. 7, 8. ‡ Si malè feci, à te didici.

mon's father taught him, and he teacheth his children to keep God's commandments and live.* Timothy's grandmother Lois, and mother Eunice had trained him up from a child in a knowledge of the holy scriptures, and you are far from the frame of God's children, if you neglect this.

(5.) You flatly disobey a divine command: "train up a child in the way he should go;" "bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" this is that which God established as a testimony in Jacob, and appointed as a law in Israel, that they should make them known to their children;† and dare you live in the wilful neglect of a divine command?

(6.) Common humanity will rise up against you. Have you no love to the offspring of your own loins? are you become cruel like the ostriches in the wilderness?‡ cruel to their souls, their better part? what! will you cark and care to get food and raiment for their dying bodies, and have you no regard for their never-dying souls? O merciless parents, that will not speak a word to save them from hell!

(7.) How will the wretched children of profane or negligent parents, reprobate them in hell, and curse the day that ever they were born of such cruel parents? O the doleful cries of your lost children will ring confounding notes in your ears! Ah guilty and miserable father! ah cruel mother! that would never speak one word to prevent my falling into this place of torments, or help me up towards heavenly felicity; nay, your bad example and wilful neglect drew me into this eternal misery; you had time enough, and motives enow to persuade you to your duty, had you warned me while my heart was tender, and affections pliable, you had delivered your own souls and me from this scene of woe; it was as easy for you to have put a Bible, as a play or a novel, into my hands; to have corrected me for sinning, as for offending you about a trifle; one word in season might have saved my poor soul: but the day is past, you and I are to smart here for our folly together, to all eternity. Oh what gnashing of teeth will this cause against each other, and against themselves for ever!

You will say, what would you have us to do for our children? I answer,

(1.) Instruct them in the main principles of religion, teach them catechisms, inculcate practical truths, the immortality of their souls, their woful state by nature, the necessity of conversion, the excellency of Christ, the nature of saving faith and repentance, the use of the sacraments, the importance of eternity, the great end of their lives, the account they must

* Gen. xviii. 19. Josh. xxiv. 15. Prov. iv. 4.
† Prov. xxii. 6. Ephes. vi. 4. Psalm lxxviii. 4—6. ‡ Lam. iv. 3.

give, the necessity of preparing for death, &c.; familiarize these things to them, and enforce them by your affectionate entreaties to regard them.

(2.) Teach them by your practice: let your lives be a lively comment on your rules, they will take more notice of what you do, than what you say; children are apish imitators of parents, examples are cogent arguments; say as Gideon, "look on me, and do likewise;"* let them never see you do any thing that you would not see them do, commend religion to them by your own experience, say, taste and see that the Lord is good, try God's ways, and you will find, as I have found, that his paths drop fatness.

(3.) Correct them when they need it. A child differs nothing from a servant, he is of a servile spirit, and must be kept in awe; you must chasten him betimes, and while there is hope, before his sinfulness grow up into stubbornness, and he be past dealing with. "Withhold not correction from the child, for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die; thou shalt beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from hell."†

(4.) Pray over them, follow your instructions, examples, corrections, with earnest supplications. Alas, all your doings will not avail, without God's grace and blessing to second all; you cannot prevail, but God can; pour out your souls with them and for them. "O that Ishmael might live before thee!"‡ You lose all your labour without divine concurrence; he only can water the seed that you sow, and make it spring up; he must strike with the great hammer; he who must teach and reach their hearts, sits in heaven: plead the covenant for them, and put them daily into God's hands, if you would see them do well.

But this is not pertinent to my design; I shall therefore return to young people.

Secondly, Exhortation and instruction may be suggested to young people, by the doctrine of the text. Be sure you take the wise man's advice, to "remember your Creator now in the days of your youth." I need not repeat the arguments already advanced, nor add new ones. Enough has been said to convince the judgment of the equity, the honour, and the advantage attending this course, and danger of the contrary. And you may reflect upon the import of this word, remember; how you may use your memory aright for promoting religion; wherein remembering our Creator hath influence on practical godliness. I refer you to what has been said on these things. All I shall yet further add, is to lay down some practical directions proper

* Judges vii. 17. † Gal. iv. 1. Prov. xiii. 24. xix. 18. xxiii. 13, 14.
‡ Gen. xvii. 18.

for young persons entering upon the stage of this world, and launching into this tumultuous ocean, that they may steer their course aright to the haven of eternal rest, in these twenty particulars :—

1. Remember your pedigree. Whatever respectable or noble blood you derive from your ancestors, yet your blood is tainted, you are the degenerate offspring of father Adam. You were in his loins, and sinned in him, and are fallen from God by his sin. God planted you a noble vine, wholly a right seed, but you are turned into a degenerate plant of a strange vine unto him. God made us upright, but we have sought out many inventions. * Whatever beauty is on your natural face, sin has marred the face of your souls ; whatever escutcheons blazon your arms, be sure you have lost God's image ; though you may derive your family from honourable progenitors, yet know it, your father was an Amorite, and your mother a Hittite ; you were conceived in sin, and are by nature children of wrath ;† it becomes you to know your origin, that you may be ashamed and vile in your own eyes.

2. Look after regeneration. You need a sanctifying change, corruption cannot inherit incorruption, therefore you must bear the image of the heavenly Adam. You must be partakers of the first resurrection, and second birth, or never think of going to heaven. However amiable you are, you must be new creatures ; though you may have kind natures, yet you must be partakers of a divine nature ; ‡ though you should derive your pedigree from the stock of ancient kings, yet unless God be your Father, and Jerusalem above be your mother, you are spurious and can never inherit the kingdom of God. You may be respectable to the outward view, but your souls must be cast in another mould, or cast to devils who once were better than you are. || Your old state must be renewed, and a new visage put on the face of your souls, or God will not know or own you : rest not content without it, pray, " Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." §

3. Bind yourselves apprentices. You are already under bonds, even from your infancy ; your parents dedicated you to God by baptism, you then took bounty-money to be Christ's soldiers. Confirm that vow now ; let it appear you are not forced disciples, but volunteers in God's service ; take the oath of allegiance to him ; renew your baptismal covenant ; take Father,

* Rom. v. 12. Jer. ii. 21. Eccles. vii. 29.
† Ezek. xvi. 3, 4. Psalm li. 5. Ephes. ii. 3.
‡ 1 Cor. xv. 45—50. Rev. xx. 6. John iii. 3. 2 Cor. v. 17. 2 Pet. i. 4.
|| Gal. iv. 26. Rom. vi. 17. § Psalm li. 10.

Son, and Holy Ghost to be your God; give up yourselves to him; say, I am the Lord's, thy servant, O Lord, thy servant am I.* This is the best bargain you can make, this consecrates all other bargains; yea, makes all comforts and crosses to become to you great blessings.

4. Get a good stock for commencement: he that begins the world with a small stock is always under his business: a lawyer must be long a student in the theory, before he be a practitioner; so a physician or a divine: it is true, practice will improve men's skill, but that is a pitiful, jejune person, who hath not laid in something preparatory to practice; as a Christian, you must lay in a good stock of truths and graces, in opposition to the ignorance and corruption which you brought into the world; without knowledge, your hearts are not good, and you will get no good by any thing you see, read, or hear; for all things should be reduced to the analogy of faith.† O therefore run to and fro to increase knowledge, read the scriptures, procure the best commentaries on them, write sermons, meditate on them, ask questions, get resolution of them, learn catechisms, study the fundamentals of Christianity. As old a doctor as Luther was, he confesses, that when he looked not over catechetical points, he was the worse for it; these are as bread and salt, always to be set before you, as the alphabet or grammar, still to be used; only be sincere in all; let integrity be at the bottom, and proficiency will advance.

5. Husband well; I mean not so directly, money and goods, (though if you waste not, you will not want,) but principally your time and talents; twice was this counsel written from the metropolis of the Roman empire—*redeeming the time.* ‡ Waste no time in the beginning of your lives, lest you want it in the end: amongst all those twenty-eight times, mentioned by Solomon, Eccles. iii. there is no mention of a time to cast away time; no, it is too precious a commodity to be undervalued. God forbid, you should throw it at your heels; this is the golden chain on which hangs a massy eternity; the loss of time is unsufferable, because irrecoverable. Heaven and hell depend on the improvement or non-improvement of a short time in this world; God forbid, you should say of your day of life, as Titus, of a natural day, O my friends, I have lost a day; || but fill up the vacancies of each day with some business for earth or heaven; spend no day without drawing some line for eternity. You need no pastimes to hasten time away, it posts fast enough;

* Matt. xxviii. 19. Isa. xliv. 5. Psalm cxvi. 16.
† Prov. xix. 2. Rom. xii. 6. ‡ Ephes. v. 16. Col. iv. 5.
|| Amici, diem perdidi.

you cannot call back an hour, and if you be fishes taken in an evil net, your misery will be great upon you.* Remember, time is a precious liquid in a brittle glass; O spill it not, look well to it.

6. Observe exchange-time, look to your markets; there are some special seasons, that will favour you in expediting your business with facility and success; there are nicks of time, in which, if your actions fall, they may set you forward apace: seasons of doing or receiving good last not always; the fair continues not all the year; as you have opportunity, do good; walk on the royal exchange of ordinances; frequent means of grace; it may be a greater loss than you think of, to be absent but once. Thomas was not with the disciples when Jesus came, and you know what a prejudice it was to him. The wind bloweth where it listeth. The angel comes down into the pool at a certain season, and troubles the waters; † step in upon that, give not "latitude for a day, God gives none; now or never; to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts;" now is the accepted time, now the sun shines, now the gale blows, to waft over the ship to Jesus Christ; strike while the iron is hot, miss this hour, and you may come too late, as Esau and the foolish virgins; adjourn the court to-day, as Felix did, and there may never be another session; God may strive no more with you; quench not the Spirit,‡ it may never kindle such a flame in thy heart again.

7. Spend not because you indulge hope. Some youngsters in prospect of an estate at age or in reversion, anticipate their income, and by lavish expences run themselves behind so far, that they never recover it, and are oft finally disappointed. Solomon a king, adviseth his son to know the state of his flocks and look well to his herds, for, saith he, "riches endure not for ever, or the crown to all generations," Prov. xxvii. 23—27; this is good counsel in morals; but it is desperate folly in spiritual things, to sin in hopes of repenting hereafter, or to run into arrears in hopes of being able to discharge them, this is to sin that grace may abound; but who gave you order to cut such large thongs out of God's leather? have you either time or God's grace at command? will you give him the other blow and then be friendly with him? but what if he reject you? and as he called and you would not answer, so you may call, and he will not regard you in your distress. What you do, do quickly; boast not thyself of to-morrow: ‖ presume not to omit

* Eccles. ix. 12. † Gal. vi. 10. John xx. 24. iii. 8. v. 4.
‡ Heb. xii. 17. Matt. xxv. 12. Acts xxiv. 25. Gen. vi. 3. 1 Thess. v. 19.
‖ Rom. vi. 1. Prov. i. 24—28. xxvii. 1.

duty, or commit sin in hopes of being good, when thou hast sown thy wild oats; for multitudes have gone down to hell with such self-deluding expectations. God's patience hath bounds, your hearts grow harder, you have further to go back; there is danger relative to reception; therefore, whatsoever thy hand finds to do, do it with all thy might.*

8. Endeavour to have your minds disentangled. Be not bird-limed with the world; ingulph not yourselves in too much business; you have enlisted yourselves soldiers under Christ's banner, and no man that warreth entangleth himself in the affairs of this life: if you will be rich, you fall into temptation and a snare, and into many hurtful and foolish lusts which drown men in destruction.† God forbid you should be of the mind of Nevison, the lawyer, who said, he that will not venture his body will never be valiant, he that will not venture his soul will never be rich. An aspiring mind sets the wits to work, and Satan furnishes occasions, but the higher you rise, the greater will be your fall; sit low and you sit safely. O what a remora are riches to religion; when the young man in the gospel promised fair, this shut up his passage to Christ; this opened Demas's passage from Christ. Seek not great things for thyself; this was old Jeremiah's counsel to young Baruch, content yourselves with ordinary things; let not your sails be too high or too expansive; let your moderation be known to all men; mind not high things;‡ live not above your rank, for that will make you beggars or tempt you to be covetous; study the vanity of the world, and set not your eyes upon that which is not; labour not to be rich; yea, if riches increase, set not your hearts upon them.‖

9. Know your places. Consider in what relation you stand as children to parents, guardians, tutors; as servants to masters; as young men to grave seniors or superiors in office, age, or gifts; honour thy father and mother; children obey your parents in the Lord, mind that; let all have their due; learn to distinguish God's commands from men's; obey men's commands for God's sake, but disobey not God's commands for man's sake;§ learn to be very humble and honour the aged; beware of being out of your place, for such as are so, violate every law. Be not without natural affection, esteem others better than yourselves, shew pity or charity at home; duty to parents, is service to God. Servants be subject to your masters with all fear, to churls as well as the kind, rise up before the hoary head and

* Eccles. ix. 10. † 2 Tim. ii. 4. 1 Tim. vi. 9.
‡ Matt. xix. 16—22. 2 Tim. iv. 10. Jer. xlv. 5. Phil. iv. 5. Rom. xii. 16.
‖ Prov. xxiii. 4, 5. Psalm lxii. 10. § Eph. vi 1, 2. Rom. xiii. 7.

honour the face of the old man, in so doing you fear God;* be helpful to old persons; what a good office did that young man, Paul's sister's son, do his uncle in speaking to the chief captain? Acts xxiii. 16—22. God makes *them* old, and *you* young for this end.

10. Be careful in the relations you may form. When you marry, marry in the Lord; choose such to lead your lives with here, as you desire to live with hereafter; join not yourselves with an untamed heifer, that bears not Christ's yoke, for such are sons and daughters of Belial. Act deliberately in so great a vicissitude of life; this is the axle-tree on which runs the comfort or sorrow of your future days; a good wife is God's donation in a peculiar manner, house and riches are the inheritance of fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord; search her character in the scripture, ask the mercy of God by prayer, take advice of christian friends, but be sure you have the consent of parents, propound right ends, act according to rule, and then trust God for success. O what influence have mothers on children; mothers of the kings of Israel are mentioned in the scripture; though Jehoram had a good father, namely Jehoshaphat, yet he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, why so? for the daughter of Ahab was his wife;† such are the sad consequences of forming improper alliances.

11. Associate with fit and profitable companions. Company is of an assimilating nature: the fly that feeds on dung, is coloured thereby: a man either is, or will be what his company is, if it be select and constant: a man is known by his associates. Solomon saith, "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety," yet oft perplexity; but I advise you, to prefer their quality before their number. Good counsellors are better than many; some young men are ruined by flattering parasites. Rehoboam's green heads were his ruin: Hushai's politic contrivances were applauded by vain-glorious Absalom, to his destruction:‡ how many thuosands have been undone by sinful company! Solomon begins his preparatory advice to the young man in this manner: "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not;" and how often doth he repeat and reinforce this exhortation? he urgeth the young to walk in the way of good men, and not to go in the way of evil men; for a companion of fools shall be destroyed. || If you would not have the plague, come not into infectious air; bad men's breath is poison, and hath malignant influence on others; such eastwinds blast hopeful

* 1 Thess. ii. 6. 2 Tim. iii. 3. Phil. ii. 3. 1 Tim. v. 4. 1 Pet. ii. 18. Lev. xix. 32.
† 2 Chron. xxi. 6.
‡ 1 Kings xii. 8. 2 Sam. xvii. 7—14.
|| Prov. i. 10. ii. 20.

blossoms; the devil's factors juggle good natures into hell. Nebuchadnezzar became like a beast, by being among beasts: look to your company.

12. Be not too confident, but listen to counsel. Take advice of wise and experienced Christians: be not wise in your own eyes: if any one among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise.* Quintillian saith of some, that they might have become scholars, but that they conceited themselves to be scholars good enough already: so it is with many young men. To be self-sufficient is to be altogether deficient; none err more dangerously than those who think they cannot err. Let no man think more highly of himself than he ought to think: they have been the wisest that have esteemed themselves brutish, as David and Agur.† Be nothing and you will be prepared for any thing: be humble and modest, and you are ready for divine and human counsels: whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge, but he that hateth reproof is brutish: the way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he that hearkeneth to counsel is wise: many more documents doth the wise man furnish of this sort; and withal he tells us, that a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.‡ It well becomes all men, especially the young, to suspect their own judgments, and not to say, as one in the comedy, I have counsel enough within myself.‖

13. Keep straight reckonings. Be sure you learn spiritual arithmetic; take an account of your words and actions, see whether they be good or bad; if bad, confess them to the Lord, bewail them, obtain a pardon for them under seal before you sleep—if good, give God glory, yet lament the imperfections that adhere to them, which will prevent confidence in your best duites. Search and try your ways, commune with your own hearts;§ sleep not till your accounts be well stated; huddle not things up in haste, live not at uncertainties, as we say of tradesmen, if they cast not up their books, their books will cast up them: the longer you defer, the more loth you will be to reckon; keep petty sessions to prepare for the great assizes; make all as ready as you can against the general audit; try yourselves by scripture marks, both as to sincerity of grace and proficiency in grace: take a true measure of your increase and decays in religion. By all means use sometimes to be alone.

14. Remember, God's eye is upon you: give God the glory of his omniscience and omnipresence; study Psal. cxxxix, " let

* Prov. iii. 7. 1 Cor. iii. 18.
† Psalm lxxiii. 22. Prov. xxx. 2.
‡ Prov. xii. 1, 15. x. 17. xiii. 1. xv. 5. xxix. 3, 15.
‖ Consilii satis est in me mihi.
§ Lam. iii. 40. Psalm iv. 4.

your eye be ever towards the Lord;" thus was it with David, "I have set the Lord always before me."* The knowledge of a grave person's presence will charm the roister to some reverence. "Take heed, Cato looks on thee," was accounted a serious caution at Rome; oh! but God looks on thee, man, dare not in his presence to commit a sin or omit a duty, his eyes are like a flame of fire, brighter than the glorious sun; he is of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look on iniquity; before thou say or do any thing, ask thyself this question, whether would I say or do this, if a grave person were present? nay, if a child were but present? Walk as in the sun, live still in Beer-lahai-roi, and say, as Hagar did, "Thou God seest me," and be sure you act accordingly.

15. Begin all your proceedings with God. Never attempt any thing but what you can ask God's blessing upon; be often in the duty of prayer, either in a set and solemn manner, or by frequent ejaculations. Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; accustom yourselves to a course of religious exercises. Be daily soaring aloft towards heaven; see your need, and go to the throne of grace for supply in the time of need;† forsake not that trade, block not up that road by sin; "pray without ceasing; do all in the name of the Lord Jesus;" prefix God's name to all your undertakings, prefer him to yourselves; let religion be still above worldly concerns; yea, mix religion with common affairs; if God should bid you ask what you please, beg wisdom, as Solomon did, the holier you are, the better will things prosper; the nearer the fountain, the sweeter the streams; creatures are sanctified by the word of God and prayer.‡ O never set about any work without the expectation of a blessing, for which you have a warrant by precept or promise.

16. Maintain peace with all. Despise not others' circumstances, nor pick quarrels with any, though much your inferiors; "blessed are the peace-makers;" then, cursed are the peace-breakers; God appears the former, Satan acts the latter; if you despise, you despise not men, but God: study to be quiet, and to do your own business, so you will be at peace; if it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men; there is not the worst or least, but you may need their favour, or be prejudiced by their displeasure; therefore, provoke nobody. Be courteous to all, be meek and humble;‖ study what

* Psalm xxv. 15. xvi. 8.
† Hab. i. 13. Gen. xvi. 13, 14. Phil. iv. 6. Heb. iv. 16.
‡ 1 Thess. v. 17. Col. iii. 17. 1 Kings iii. 7—9. 1 Tim. iv. 5.
‖ Matt. v. 9. 1 Thess. iv. 8, 11. Rom. xiv. 19.

will make for peace; put not forth yourselves either without a call or without bounds; observe both warrant and limit, lest you create disturbance by putting your sickle into another's harvest. Babes are apt to be quarrelsome; contention shews depravity.

17. Be willing to bear the yoke in your youth. Spurn not at the cross; kick not against the pricks; welcome every rod that God sends; it is good to be inured to affliction betimes; sin not, to create a yoke; but if God lay it on, bear it patiently, yea, cheerfully; it is dangerous to be like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. You are born to trouble, dream not of exemption all your days; some have a shower in the morning, as Joseph, David; some at noon, as Job; some towards evening, as Asa. Now a shower is best in the morning, for by God's blessing, it may make you fruitful all day: by bearing the cross, you may learn to obey our Lord's command. Those prove most experimental Christians, that are trained up in the school of affliction. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."* A Christian is a cross-bearer, it is the high road to heaven; but be sure you suffer as a Christian. Beware of suffering for your faults as malefactors, then you would be the devil's martyrs, not Christ's.

18. Consider that you must not always be here; you that are but lately entered upon the stage of this world, must have an exit; you are transient passengers: there is a time to be born and a time to die; you dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth. After our Genesis presently comes our Exodus; we grow up in morning, in the evening we are cut down and wither,† the sun of some sets immediately after it has risen. *Orimur, morimur*, we sometimes rise only to fall; think with thyself, "this may be the last day of my life," reckon not upon years;‡ as soon comes a lamb's skin to the market as an old sheep's. View the bills of mortality, see if young go not as soon as old, build not tabernacles below, look upwards; mind not things temporal, but things eternal,‖ make ready for flitting, time is daily rolling away, the sails are gathering in, you are approaching the shore, and may launch into the ocean of eternity ere you are aware; when you go, the world is gone with you, and you will take nothing along with you but either guilt or grace—remember every rational, deliberate thought, word, or deed, becomes seed sown for another world; such as you sow, such shall you reap.

* Lam. iii. 27. Jer. xxxi. 18. Job xiv. 1. 2 Tim. iii. 12.
† Eccles. iii. 2. Job iv. 19. Psal. xc. 3, 5, 6.
‡ Omnem crede diem tibi diluxisse supremum. ‖ 2 Cor. iv. 18.

O for a readiness to be gone hence! get your hearts off this vain world, lay up your treasure in heaven; let your delight be in God; trample upon all sublunary things; let the moon be under your feet, for the best of the world is but vanity, and much of it is vexation of spirit; yea, man himself in his best estate is altogether vanity;* make the best you can of the world, it can do little for you.

19. Observe and fortify yourselves against the sins of youth, take a strict account of your constitution-sins, your relation-sins, your calling-sins, and provide fit antidotes against your respective diseases; all ages, sexes, and degrees have their peculiar sins, to which they are most inclined. Every man wanders in his own way, therefore know the plague of your own heart, and keep yourselves from your own iniquity; what sproutings of corrupt nature! pluck them up or bend the bough the contrary way; for instance, (1.) If you find yourselves ignorant as the wild ass's colt, be ashamed of it, but not ashamed to confess it; so doth David and wise Agur.† I am like a beast, saith the one, I am more brutish than any man, saith the other; go to school and begin with your a b c. (2.) If you find your hearts addicted to pride and vain-glory, desire the Lord to humble you, humble yourselves, consider what worms of the dust you are. (3.) If you be passionate and peevish, tame your spirits with the example of Christ's patience, reflect on the unmanliness of passion, its groundlessness and unavailing tendency; and be angry and sin not.‡ (4.) If you find your spirits frothy and volatile, given to mirth. O direct your attention to solemn subjects, death, guilt, final accounts, and eternity, and go to the house of mourning. (5.) If you be inclined to sensuality, O flee youthful lusts, make a covenant with your eyes, watch all your senses, away with licentious gratifications and dalliances.‖ (6.) If you feel yourselves prone to intemperance, make no provision for the flesh, but beat down your bodies by fasting. (7.) If you feel your hearts rising against pious ministers or Christians and disposed to make them the subject of your raillery; think of the two captains and forty-two children, and learn to be sober-minded.§ (8.) If you be inclined to covetousness, think of Gehazi, Achan, Judas, and Demas. (9.) If you begin with any bad customs, which are apt to grow into habits, study Jer. xiii. 23.¶ (10.)

* Eccles. ii. 11. Psalm xxxix. 5.
† Isa. liii. 6. 1 Kings viii. 38. Ps. xviii. 23. Job xi. 12. Ps. lxxiii. 22.
‡ Prov. xxx. 2. Job xlii. 6. James i. 20. Eph. iv. 26.
‖ Eccl. vii. 2—4. 2 Tim. ii. 22. Job xxxi. 1.
§ Rom. xiii. 14. 1 Cor. ix. 27. 2 Kings i. 12. 1 Kings ii. 24. Tit. ii. 6.
¶ 2 Kings v. 27. Josh. vii. 25.

If you bless yourselves in sin, and put off repentance, awake your spirits with the thoughts of Esau, the foolish virgins, and examine carefully Deut. xxix. 19, 20. Prov. i. 24—28; thus you may and must suppress sin in its first appearances.*

20. Make good improvement of your innocent inclinations. The great Creator hath so differently tempered men's bodily constitutions, that whoever studies his natural temper, may find employment in turning it into a religious channel, so regulating his natural disposition as to promote God's glory and the good of his soul; for instance,

(1.) Art thou of a phlegmatic and melancholy constitution, prone to indulge grief and sorrow? O turn this stream into godly sorrow, grieve for sin, for the corruption of thy nature, for the transgressions of thy life; no sadness will do thee good any further than it bears a religious character; be not however passive but active in self-humiliating duties like Josiah.†

(2.) Art thou naturally of a fearful timorous spirit, as Jether feared because he was but a youth?‡ Improve this trait of thy mind to make thee afraid of sin, and stand in awe of God, fear to come near the brink of danger; tremble to imbrue thy hands in the blood of thy soul, or thy Saviour; fear hell, and sin which is worse.

(3.) Art thou of a bold, venturesome spirit, and darest attempt to meet the greatest danger or gigantic Goliath, like the stripling David? O get an undaunted spirit to encounter infernal potentates, and internal corruptions; fight the good fight of faith; let not spiritual enemies make a prey of you. O that I could say, I write unto you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one, and because you are strong, and the word of God abideth in you.‖

(4.) Art thou of a cheerful, joyous spirit, disposed to hilarity? Turn this cheerfulness into joy in the Lord, raise up your spirits to heavenly exultation; yea break forth into singing; drunkards are jocund and sing; do you also make melody in your hearts to the Lord.§

(5.) Art thou of a ductile, facile, gentle spirit? easily drawn to any thing by the example of others, and their persuasions. O be flexible God-wards, God forbid thou shouldst be pliable with respect to other things, and only obstinate in things relative to religion; wilt thou be so good natured as to comply with any suggestion tending to thy eternal ruin, and yet boggle at that which tends to thy own salvation? O for a little of that wisdom

* Heb. xii. 17. Matt. xxv. 12.
† James iv. 9. 2 Cor. vii. 10. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 27. ‡ Judg. viii. 20.
‖ 1 Sam xvii. 42. 1 Tim. vi. 12. 1 John ii. 13, 14.
§ Phil. iv. 4. Ephes. v. 18, 19.

which is from above;* which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated!

(6.) Art thou naturally witty, ingenious, and inclined to study that which may whet invention, and exercise thy faculties? behold here is work enough before thee. Study that wisdom which dwells with prudence, which finds out knowledge of witty inventions, thou mayest find enough in the scripture to puzzle the quickest genius;† for here a lamb may wade and an elephant may swim. Read the histories of sacred writ, find out the riddles and familiarize thyself with the parables of the bible; Samson tried his companions with a riddle; God bids Ezekiel put forth a riddle, and speak a parable to the house of Israel; there are many dark sayings in the word:‡ read the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the Revelation.

(7.) Art thou given to novelties, singularities, or antiquities? Here you may all be fitted with suitable matter; behold, new heavens, and a new earth; (what do those mean?) wherein dwelleth righteousness, or righteous men.‖ If you have Athenian curiosty, and would hear of news, see whether you be new creatures, inquire into the nature and necessity of this new creation, wherein old things are past away, and behold all things are become new. There are also ancient things, the ancient of days; O that you would think of him who is from the beginning, and inquire for the old and good way, the old and new commandment, which is both in different respects; it is a great rarity, to have novelty and antiquity both in one subject.§

(8.) Are you succourless, yea, and destitute, so that you know not what to do for a livelihood, if left to yourselves? Poor soul, betake thyself to the all-sufficient God, who will supply all thy wants according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. You cannot live by your own shifts, learn to live by faith; you are not able to defend or secure yourselves from danger, fly by faith and prayer to the name of the Lord, which is a strong tower; commit yourselves and affairs to the Lord,¶ then take no anxious thought.

(9.) Art thou of a studious, patient, or contemplative temper, loving to be alone? Well, thou hast a field sufficiently large before thee; secret prayer, reading, contemplating the nature of God, meditating on his word and works day and night, you may read God in every thing. O that you had

* James iii. 17. † Prov. viii. 12.
‡ Judg. xiv. 12. Ezek. xvii. 2. Psalm xlix. 4.
‖ Isa. lxv. 17. 2 Pet. iii. 13. Acts xvii. 21.
§ 2 Cor. v. 17. 1 John ii. 14. Jer. vi. 16. 1 John ii. 7, 8.
¶ Phil. iv. 19. Prov. xviii. 10. 1 Peter iv. 19. Matt. vi. 25.

many and precious thoughts of God, so that when you awake, you might be still with him.*

(10.) Art thou active, vigorous, and always occupied? so was Jeroboam, whom Solomon saw to be industrious, (of an operative head and hand,) and he found him both honour and labour, lest he should plot and do mischief. Let it be so with you, young men, since you will be busy, set yourselves in proper employments, lest (as we say of some children) you do what you should not do. Here is work enough for you in general or particular circumstances towards God, yourselves, your relations, societies, the church and nation; you never need to want employment, while you have a God, and a soul and body to be employed about. O set yourselves to work, and be daily engaged; up and be doing, be not slothful but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.† I shall conclude, with the apostle's practical application of the doctrine of the resurrection, 1 Cor. xv. 58, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord." How happy a sight would it be, to see gracious young men in our congregations, plants of renown, a hopeful nursery of young trees in God's orchard, to bring forth fruit in due season! what encouragement would it give us, that God would still continue among us! If God plant trees, surely he doth not intend to pluck us up, root us out, or lay us waste for the wild boar. A young nursery may furnish many plantations, and grow up to be strong trees in due time.

Thirdly, The doctrine which has been stated, supplies encouragement to such as do or desire to remember their Creator in the days of their youth. Go forward, my young friends, as you have begun; be not appalled or amazed with the roarings of the lion of hell, or barkings of the dogs on earth, nor with the dauntings of your own spirits; fear not them that can only kill the body, but fear him that can cast soul and body into hell.‡ Consider,

1. Your Creator is able to bear you out in that to which he calls you. The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are his everlasting arms. Of pious young Joseph, it is said, "Joseph is a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall: the archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him; but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob."‖ Fear not falling out of the arms of omnipotence; be

* Psalm cxxxix. 17, 18.
† 1 Kings xi. 28. Rom. xii. 11.
‡ Matt. x. 28.
‖ Deut. xxxiii. 27. Gen. xlix. 22—24.

not afraid of being conquered, when the infinite God is your Captain: lean upon your beloved, and fear not; out of weakness you shall be made strong; your little one shall become a thousand; you that are feeble, shall become as David, yea, as the angel of the Lord.* Be sincere, and you shall persevere; thou shalt be holden up, for God is able to make thee stand. "Though the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; yet they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."†

2. There have gone before you a brave army of valiant young saints that have won the prize, and wear the crown, with palms in their hands: it is an encouraging thing to follow heroic examples. Behold the cloud of witnesses; you may say, "who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows?" How many young warriors under Christ's banner, yea, martyrs in flames of their own love and their enemy's rage, have left us blessed instances of youthful piety! these have demonstrated, that this duty is practicable; their wisdom hath outstripped their years; their experience has exceeded many old men's, for grace doth not always crown the hoary head; great men are not always wise, neither do the aged always understand judgment; but the Spirit of God can give subtilty to the simple, to the young man, knowledge and discretion.‡ How many have you seen that, in the bud of nature, are ripe in grace! The living fish hath grown too much for the dead shell; lively grace in their souls hath outgrown their mortal bodies, and they have left glorious monuments behind them, to perpetuate a never-dying reputation.

3. God has more regard for the youngest saint than for the most glorious, yet graceless prince. The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour; a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit, whatever be his age, God stands not upon that; better is a poor and wise child, than an old and foolish king; none so high in God's books as the gracious soul, though simple in natural things, and destitute of worldly grandeur, and contemptible in the esteem of men. "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee," saith God.‖ O what esteem hath the glorious God for the poorest, rawest, youngest child in his family! The great Shepherd gathers the lambs in his arms, carries them in his bosom, and gently leads those that are with young: bless God that thou

* Zech. xii. 8. † Rom. xiv. 4. Isa. xl. 30, 31.
‡ Isa. lx. 8. Job xxxii. 9. Prov. i. 4.
‖ Prov. xii. 26. xvii. 7. Eccles. iv. 13. Isa. xliii. 4.

art an attendant on the king of heaven, admitted into his presence-chamber, this honour have all his saints, old and young, rich and poor; these are they that find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man; these young people have a guard of holy angels to attend them, for they are all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation; they rejoice at their conversion and guard them into heaven. * O the honour and happiness of a young convert! he is the flower of his age, the comfort of his relations, the crown of pious ministers, and an ornament of the church of God.

4. God will give the young believer, either a long, useful life; or a safe, speedy, and desirable death. If God have work for his young children to do, they shall live long to be instruments of much good. I knew an eminent minister, who was converted at six years of age, and lived usefully and died honourably at eighty-four; "for length of days is in wisdom's right hand, and in her left hand, riches and honour;" a long life is promised as a mercy and entailed upon piety; "Come, ye children, hearken unto me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil; depart from evil and do good."† O how eminent have they been who have set out early in the ways of God! they have come late to heaven, and carried many along with them thither. But if it be the will of God, and you desire to be dissolved and be with Christ which is best of all,‡ you shall be speedily wafted over the Jordan of death into Canaan. Enoch had a double advantage; first, he was translated, that he should not see death, this you cannot expect; and secondly, he lived but three hundred and sixty-five years, which was then only a third part of the time most of them lived in those days; whence was this? Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him; || he set out early, and he was quickly at the end of his walk; God had so much of his company, and was so well pleased with it, that he would have him in his immediate presence, and therefore made him bound over the gulf of death, and lifted him up, soul and body into heaven; a peculiar privilege. But however, if your souls be seasoned with grace in your younger days, the hoary head will be found in the way of righteousness, the sting of death will be extracted, and conscience will speak peace in a dying hour; you may say as good Hezekiah did, "Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how

* Isa. xl. 11. Prov. iii. 4. Heb. i. 14. Luke xv. 7.
† Prov. iii. 16. Psal. xxxiv. 11—14. ‡ Phil. i. 23. || Gen. v. 24.

I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight."*

On the whole, remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth: Why so? While the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them. As if he had said, it becomes thee, young man, now to commence a war against thy spiritual enemies; for as it is now most needful, so thou art most capable of conflicting with, and conquering thy impetuous appetites and passions, which drown thousands of the young in perdition: but old age is a weak, infirm thing, burdensome in itself, and still more burdensome, when loaded with the self-tormenting remembrance of youthful follies, with the formidable prospect of approaching death, and with an apprehension of a strict account at the bar of God. Thus the deluded old man now sees he cannot live, and dares not die; and, alas, his heart is hardened with the deceitfulness of sin, the consequence of which is, that the wretched veteran in a course of iniquity, expires in vain presumption, or awful despair. O young man, bethink thyself now of what must be done at some period, or thou be undone for ever. Do the work now, which would greatly increase thy trouble afterwards, when thou wilt have more to do, and be less prepared to do it. Pray while thou canst; pray, repent, believe, turn to God and mourn over sin, while thy heart is tender, and while it may do thee good, and be accepted of God; for the years hasten on, in which thou wilt say, thou hast no pleasure.

* Isaiah xxxviii. 3.

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